

**SPINSTERS AND AUTHORS: WOMEN'S ROLES IN MARGARET
OLIPHANT'S WRITING**

by

Zsuzsanna Varga

A Thesis Submitted for the PhD Degree
The University of Edinburgh
June, 2003



ABSTRACT

Using recent critical developments in feminist social history and literary historiography, as well as the recent, increasing interest in Victorian journalism, this thesis reexamines Margaret Oliphant's position on women's roles from a sociological and historical perspective. The question of Oliphant's position on women's roles and her own practice has been raised before, yet literary historians have derived their conclusions from Oliphant's fiction rather than journalism. This thesis attempts to redress the balance by providing a close reading of Oliphant's journalism, and to locate Oliphant's own activity in the carefully gendered world of Victorian journalism.

The examination of Oliphant's journalism, a largely neglected area, along with selections from her extensive output of fiction, has allowed the identification of two fundamental roles for women which she represents as natural to the nineteenth century woman: the domestic woman and the woman writer. In the second part of her long writing career, Oliphant also explored those alternative domestic structures that enable female authority and domestic existence. Oliphant's examination of female authorship partly replicates this pattern by suggesting the naturalness of female authorship, and this allows her to start to develop an early theory of female writing and literary history, analysing the ways in which the female author can act in the marketplace. This examination is complemented with the evaluation of Oliphant's career, which demonstrates a Victorian attempt at female participation in the professionalising world of letters.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is of my own composition except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and it has never been submitted, in part or in whole, for any other degree.

Signed

Zsuzsanna Varga

Department of English Literature
The University of Edinburgh
June, 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My foremost gratitude is to my supervisors Professor Ian Campbell and Dr Bill Bell who have unfailingly supported me over the several years of my research. I owe both of them gratitude for their enthusiastic help, support, friendship and encouragement; stimulating conversations, and lots of else. I also feel very grateful to them not only for their useful suggestions and interesting ideas, but also for helping me establish other channels of research and helping me clarify my real research interests. I am also indebted, amongst others, to Dr Paul Innes (University of Glasgow), Dr Kevin McGinley and Dr Martin Philip who helped me with useful advice and information at various stages of my research.

Needless to say, I am also indebted to various other friends who have given me moral and sometimes practical support during my research. I cannot list all of them now, suffice it to say that Dr Isla Jack and Peter Sherwood have given me plenty of advice as far as linguistic matters as well as the clarification of my ideas were concerned. I also remain fully indebted to Dr Timea Tisza for her unfailing support, encouragement and practical suggestions.

Acknowledgement and gratitude are due to the Faculty of Arts (University of Edinburgh) for the Faculty of Arts Studentship and Teaching Grant, as well as to the British Vice-Chancellors Committee for the Overseas Research Student Award, which helped the initial stages of my research.

And, of course, my gratitude goes to my long-suffering family.

In the memory of H.A.G.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: SITUATING THE DOMESTIC WOMAN WRITER: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CONTEXT	14
‘The most remarkable woman of her time:’ Oliphant and her critics	15
‘Her peculiar designation:’ the legacy of the Enlightenment	23
‘Haven from the market:’ domestic ideology	27
To ‘reconcile this dismal progress with nature:’ women’s work	31
‘She is ploughing it in all directions already:’ women’s writing	36
CHAPTER THREE: FICTION AND DOMESTIC EXPERIMENTS	49
‘The kingdom was wisely governed:’ early representations of domestic authority	57
The spinster and her family: earlier experiments with alternative domesticity	62
Redefining domesticity: marital failure and expanded domesticities	69
‘Not left out in the cold:’ alternative domesticities	79
(Asexual friendship)	79
(From woman to woman)	86
(Maternal alternatives)	93
CHAPTER FOUR: REPRESENTATIONS OF AUTHORSHIP	110
‘Buttons and hooks-and-eyes:’ authorship in early journalism	112
‘This shall be my trade:’ Female authorship in early novels	116
‘The Amazonian Cohort:’ Authorship in later journalism	123
(Beginning to write)	124
(Turning to Genres)	126
(Educating the female author)	128
(The text in society)	131
(Writing for the marketplace)	132
(Female Aesthetic)	136
Mrs Severn and Mr Sandford: authorship in later fiction	146

CHAPTER FIVE : JILL OF ALL TRADES: OLIPHANT AS AUTHOR	158
‘A friendless woman:’ Oliphant and the Blackwood house	159
‘The <i>porte-voix</i> :’ Establishing critical authority	168
CHAPTER SIX: EPILOGUE	195
Bildungsroman with a difference	202
Künstlerroman with a difference	208
Canonical potential	222
BIBLIOGRAPHY	231
APPENDIX	240

PERIODICAL TITLES ABBREVIATED

BM = Blackwood's Magazine

CE= Chambers's Encyclopaedia

CM= The Cornhill Magazine

CR= The Contemporary Review

DNB= The Dictionary of National Biography

EIM= The English Illustrated Magazine

ER= The Edinburgh Review

Fraser's= Fraser's Magazine

GW = Good Words

LM= Longman's Magazine

MM= Macmillan's Magazine

PMM= Pall Mall Magazine

SN = St. Nicholas

SJG= St. James's Gazette

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

the female sage

Peterson

Writing about Oliphant's fiction offers the reader a major challenge. Not only is there the issue of selecting the best pieces from her extensive output of some hundred titles; there follows a series of decisions deriving from the question: which is the real Oliphant? Is it the author of the Trollopean three-decker of the Carlingford series; the author of brilliant short stories reminiscent of the finest late Maupassant; or the more elusive stories of the supernatural in a distinctly fin-de-siècle Scottish tradition? On reading Oliphant's fiction, one discovers all facets of what the Colbys describe as Oliphant's particular contribution to literature in English: 'Scotch sagacity' and 'Scotch second sight;' 'the urbanity of attitude to Victorian sanctities' and an 'unusually cosmopolitan outlook.'¹

Yet the evaluation and meaning of Oliphant's work is deeply embedded in her own time – not unsurprisingly was she called the 'most remarkable woman of her time.'² Critics have naturally turned to the *Autobiography* – supposedly a self-revelatory genre – for information on this unique Victorian woman of letters. But in the *Autobiography*, the prolific and erudite Oliphant, remains surprisingly elusive, and resists attempts at interpretation.

Let me be done with this – I wonder if I will ever have time to put a few autobiographical bits down before I die. I am in very little danger of having my life written. No one belonging to me has energy enough to do it, or even to gather the fragments for someone else and that is all the better in this point of view – for what could be said of me? George Eliot and George Sand make me half inclined to cry over my poor little unappreciated self – 'Many love me (*i.e.* in a sort of way), but by none am I enough beloved. These two bigger women did things which I have never felt the least temptation to do – but how very much more enjoyment they seem to have got out of their life, how much more praise and homage and honour! [...] I acknowledge frankly that there is nothing in me – a fat, little, commonplace woman, rather tongue-tied – to impress any one; and yet there is a sort of whimsical injury in it which makes me sorry for myself.'³[17]

Indeed, what is surprising about the *Autobiography* is not only its self-deprecatory tone but also the fact that it remains evasive about the fact that it was written by a literary author. A sense of professional progression or intellectual history, and the growing list of publications and acknowledgement of public appreciation are conspicuously absent from the text; it appears that the author of the *Autobiography* in fact refused to contemplate the very concept of her own authorship.

While this modesty was perhaps not entirely unbecoming in a Victorian woman writer, the obituaries spoke of Oliphant's achievement as an author in a laudatory tone. The notice in *Blackwood's Magazine* gave her life and work unconditional praise:

It was in 1849 that Mrs Oliphant first essayed fiction, and scarce a year has since elapsed which has not added its quota to the varied and wonderful list. During all the time she has made good her position in the first rank of our domestic novelists – writing with the profoundest insight and tenderest human sympathy with all the vicissitudes of life. [...] It is, however, less as a novelist than as an essayist and critic that we prefer to think of Mrs Oliphant here; and while we are proud that the great bulk of her work in this direction has adorned the pages of 'Maga' for so many years. [...] it was [...] in periodical writing – the medium she loved best – that she attained perhaps her highest felicity of style.⁴

As the critics emphasise, not only was Oliphant an excellent author of fiction, but she was also a practising novelist whose centre of identity was, ironically, rooted more deeply in non-fiction than in fiction. The assessment of the obituarists was correct: Oliphant was a formidable critic – a literary and a social critic whose opinions helped to shape the attitudes of the Victorian middle classes. Not only was she a regular contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, but her literary histories were widely read by the English middle classes. Reading Oliphant's journalism is thus doubly useful: not only does it add refinements to the portrait of Oliphant, but it also expands our grasp of Victorian studies – Victorian women's studies and studies in Victorian non-fiction in particular.

The present project of examining Oliphant's journalism started out with the consideration of the well-known issue of Oliphant's contributions to the woman question. This was understandable, considering that the only focus of twentieth century critical interest in Victorian women's journalism was for a long time their position in the social debate.⁵ This exploration was partly occasioned by Oliphant's contributions to the debate in *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Fraser's Magazine*, where she discussed the women's rights legislation of the time and contemporary issues of employment, the professions and women's status as citizens between 1856 and 1880, and partly by what Langland calls her 'practical feminism,' that is to say, Oliphant by her writing alone single-handedly supported her own children into adulthood and beyond, as well as two of her depressive brothers, and achieved success in the highly competitive world of Victorian publishing.⁶ Though Oliphant was perhaps not the

only woman of her time with such achievements to her credit, she was probably the most prominent Victorian female author to be successful in so many ways. The critical debate on the nature and degree of Oliphant's feminism grew to respectable proportions in the 1980s and the 1990s, and her feminist credentials have been extensively debated.⁷ Her first modern biographer, Merryn Williams, has analysed Oliphant's position on the woman question both in her fine biography *Margaret Oliphant* in 1986, as well as her article in Dale Trela's collection of essays *Margaret Oliphant: A Gentle Subversive* (1995). Ralph Jessop discussed the question in his article in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (1997), John Stock Clarke also devoted a chapter to this issue in his doctoral dissertation (1987) and Valerie Sanders offers evidence of Oliphant's anti-feminism in her *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists* (1996). While the amount of serious attention devoted to Oliphant's feminism may suggest to some that a resuscitation of the debate may be supererogatory, further exploration of her feminist stance is well worthwhile. Recent critical developments, such as Nicola Diane Thompson's volume *Victorian Woman Writers and the Woman Question* (1999), and new essays in Joanne Shattock's *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900* (2001), suggest that the framework against which nineteenth-century authors' attitudes to the woman question had been measured has dramatically shifted over the last decade.⁸ This shift was at least partly caused by our expanding knowledge of the history of the nineteenth century women's movement. Much new detail now available allows us to evaluate individual positions on a more finely calibrated scale, and to understand, indeed, that the very term *feminism* was used in a rather looser sense in the nineteenth century and that the view "on one issue did not necessarily indicate a 'parallel' stance on another."⁹ Moreover, the increased self-confidence of feminist critics now enables us to be more sensitive to other, older feminist voices that 'speak a feminist language' different from our own.¹⁰

It was the interest in Oliphant's feminism as manifested in her directly political articles that attracted attention to her other journalistic work – indeed, the amount and depth of intellectual engagement, and the breadth of coverage in them eclipsed those of her articles on the woman question. Oliphant is best known, if at all, for her very successful Carlingford novels in the 1860s, and her stories of the

supernatural written in the 1880s; yet she was an immensely prolific journalist and literary essayist as well, contributing more than 200, at least fifteen-page-long essays to *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1854 and 1897. Her contributions to other literary periodicals, such as the *Cornhill Magazine*, *The Edinburgh Review* and, later, weeklies such as the *St. James Gazette* and *The Spectator*, were also numerous and significant. Yet the field of women's non-fiction was not in the forefront of critical interest when this writer began work on Oliphant's journalism in 1997. In fact, the investigation of allegedly sub-literary non-fiction, such as journalism, was held in little academic esteem until the 1990s. To some extent, the study of journalism as a literary category was precluded by a very practical consideration: until the relatively recent publication of the pioneering, monumental and empirical *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* (1966-1989) it would have been impossible to identify authors because of the practice of literary anonymity in journalism – a circumstance that gave a homogeneous appearance to Victorian periodicals and also encouraged women's journalism, while keeping the contributors in obscurity.¹¹ But perhaps even more importantly, the modernist privileging of fiction over other genres, and the similarly modernist formalist insistence 'on the isolation of texts of all periods from history, culture, gender, production and ideology' also meant the devaluation of literary criticism and non-fiction.¹² Sporadic earlier discussion of journalism and literary criticism did exist, yet, as Barbara Onslow points out, 'early studies of the press concentrated primarily upon influential journals, publishers and editors' and very often consisted of monographs on serial titles such as F. D. Tredrey's volume on the Blackwood publishing company *The House of Blackwood: 1804-54*, or the collected volumes of journalism by writers accepted in the canon.¹³ Thus, as Onslow points out, women journalists and female literary critics were until recently occluded and 'marginalised.'¹⁴ This was largely rooted in nineteenth and twentieth century wholesale acceptance of the definition of the literary critic as 'Men of Letters.' This was manifest in Carlyle's terminology, which established the resilient single-gendered, monolithic definition of the literary critic, but also in the fact that such end-of-the-nineteenth-century series as Morley's *English Men of Letters* series programmatically excluded 'Women of Letters' from their critical series, and with only a few exceptions, the collection in book form of previously published periodical

articles by women was also less common.¹⁵ The problem is succinctly summed up in the statement that ‘no terms emerged to describe women essayists or historians or journalists,’ despite the fact that women non-fiction writers existed in significant numbers.¹⁶

By the time the present writer began her research on Oliphant’s journalism in 1997, the study of journalism had gained some academic legitimacy, and the publication of John Stock Clarke’s bibliography of Oliphant’s non-fiction (1997), which complemented the list of Oliphant’s contributions to *Blackwood’s* included in Coghill’s 1899 edition of Oliphant’s *Autobiography*, made detailed research possible.¹⁷ In addition, a more modern interrogation of literary journalism emerged in the aftermath of the intra- and inter-disciplinary developments in literary studies in the 1990s, which included the rise of poststructuralism, of communication and cultural studies, as well as of the sociology of the text: ‘a method and field resulting, remarkably, from the intersection of cultural theory and the more traditional constituencies of historical and descriptive bibliography.’¹⁸ These new critical approaches examined journalism often in the same terms as fiction. The beneficial effects of literary sociology are palpable in Laurel Brake’s work, and although her book *Subjugated Knowledges* (1994) focuses mainly on case studies of male literary journalists, it has been particularly enriching from a theoretical perspective. The parameters of the female journalist’s – or ‘female sage’s’ – social identity and the thematic, narrative and rhetorical strategies deployed by them to negotiate their anomalous position in the masculine world of Victorian non-fiction publishing have been investigated by recent critics such as Dorothy Mermin, in *Godiva’s Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880* (1993), and Linda Peterson’s chapter ‘Sage Writing’ mostly on women’s non-fiction in Herbert Tucker’s *Victorian Literature and Culture* (1999).¹⁹ Mermin provides a theoretical overview of the relationship between the female sage and the appropriate genres and themes and attitudes to knowledge, and then analyses Anna Jameson’s, Sara Coleridge’s and Harriet Martineau’s early- and mid-Victorian experiments with the assumption of the position of the female sage, while Peterson’s analysis provides a rough guide to later non-masculine sage writing through the analysis of the careers of Martineau, Cobbe and Linton. These scholars have contributed greatly to the interpretation and partial

reinstatement of critics such as Oliphant into the canon of literary critics. From a more pragmatic angle, Barbara Onslow's encyclopedic volume, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2000), a goldmine of factual information on lesser-known Victorian female essayists and journalists, proved particularly useful to contextualise Oliphant's career and literary views within a detailed map of the diverse aspects of the activities of female journalists.²⁰ Some attention to Oliphant as literary journalist has, in fact, been paid in the past. The Colbys tentatively outlined the contours of themes and aesthetic creeds in Oliphant's literary journalism, and Elizabeth Jay's impressive literary biography of Oliphant (*Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, 1995) as well as Joanne Shattock's work specifically on Oliphant's journalism in diverse publications provides insightful descriptions and overall pictures of Oliphant's work as journalist.²¹ The present writer's work continues these interrogations: the interrogation of how Oliphant's activity as a female journalist fitted into an essentially masculine world.

On reading Oliphant's journalism, however, other useful perspectives emerged, which have led ultimately to a far more subtle and multi-layered picture of Oliphant's oeuvre. Her complex activity as a writer of non-fiction – a social as well as a literary critic – suggested that she saw (present and past) women in the natural subject positions of the domestic woman and the literary woman, with the added (and not very elaborated) role of the female sovereign. The original project of doing justice to the nature and degree of Oliphant's feminism, therefore, shifted subtly to the description of Oliphant's analysis of women in these subject positions, to 'women in relationships' with an emphasis not only upon biological determinism but also upon those social structures that enable the exercise of true feminine character.²² Her discussion of sexed gender roles is always rooted in a very clearly defined concept of gender difference, as well as in a very carefully demarcated subdivision of social reality into private and public realms, in which individuals (female subjects) acted. Davidoff and Hall define this distinction as 'the common-sense distinction between the realm of morality and emotion and that of rational activity, particularly conceived as market forces.'²³ In Oliphant's case, the situation is somewhat more complicated: her female textual subjects, whether in fiction or journalism, never brave the realm of naked business or politics; rather, what Oliphant is interested in

about the changing world, (so dominated by a clear-cut sexual division of labour) is the way in which her female subjects seek the (social) possibilities of realising their own potential in the role of the domestic woman and in the role of the domestic author. Central to the understanding of these subject positions is the concept of work: work for women and work by women. In both domestic capacities (mother and housekeeper), women perform labour in the industrial venue of the home, and in a very specific sense, serious, professional – though unpaid – labour: sometimes the moral guidance of the young, sometimes physical labour, and sometimes the control of the social ‘signifying practices.’²⁴ Writing is also represented as natural labour for the domestic woman: for Oliphant, the act of writing was not rooted in self-expression. Rather, it was a social act, performed in the domestic environment, and its ultimate purpose was achieving the social good, social cohesion and social and political stability – concepts that often surface in mid-Victorian writing on the role of literature, but have less often been studied in a gender-specific context.

In writing on Oliphant’s journalism, perhaps the greatest challenge was presented by the structuring of the chapters, partly because of the immense amount and generic richness of the literary material and partly because of the fact that it was produced over forty-five years, between 1854 and 1897, and for a variety of different periodicals. The sheer quantity of the material did indeed warrant a descriptive and chronological presentation of her output, in a kind of ‘life and (non-fictional) letters’ structure. Yet this structure would have presented difficulties for exploring her evolving ideas, often discussed in reversions to the same topic in generically different pieces of writing; and it would not have done justice to the innovative perspectives of Oliphant on Victorian sacred cows. In addition, it was obvious that the richness and the underlying consistency of Oliphant’s work cannot be shown without the inclusion of some of her fiction, of which I chose lesser-known pieces. The parallel reading of her fiction and journalism shows the influence of her journalism upon her creative work: the consistent redeployment of the same themes as well as the tension between the demands of fiction in contrast with the demands of periodical writing.

Here, in Chapter One, therefore I look at the disciplinary position of women’s journalism, and discuss its implications for the study of Oliphant. Chapter Two

begins by reviewing existing criticism of Oliphant's work, and calls attention to the absence of critical commentary on Oliphant's analysis of women's domestic positions as well as of her journalism – the genre and mode of writing that provides the site of Oliphant's analysis of female domestic positions and authorship. Chapter Two then continues to explore the intellectual traditions against which Oliphant's views on women's psychological and social identity need to be measured, as well as the current debates on women's writing and women's work: these defined both Oliphant's practice of female authorship as well as her critical analysis of women's literature. Chapter Three examines Oliphant's essays in detail, and provides a detailed analysis of Oliphant's commitment to the idea that women's primary role is the domestic, with the concomitant responsibilities of the mother and the housekeeper, and analyses the radical revisions of those structures that make possible the best fulfilment of these roles. Chapter Four continues the close reading of Oliphant's journalism, uncovering her sustained, sociologically-driven analysis of women's other position, the characteristic, widely practised, and culturally accepted subject position of authorship, and suggests that her novel contribution to cultural and literary history consists in the fact that she provided the first sustained sociologically-oriented analysis of female authorship; and her vision of authorship, apparently conservative but characteristically mid-Victorian, consists in her commitment to the idea that authorship is a social act rather than a question of individualistic effort. Chapter Five analyses her career and authorial practice, and by considering the public failure of her own career on the one hand, and, on the other, her simultaneous success in securing herself a critical authority by intensely participating in the public debates defining the nature of good literature, articulates the tension between the two aspects of her career. Finally, Chapter Six, an epilogue on the *Autobiography*, starts out with the assumption that its narrator is a fictionalised representation of, rather than identical with, the author, and proceeds to analyse the relationship between the themes of the text with similar themes explored in previous fiction. It suggests that Oliphant's critical marginalisation is, to some extent, attributable to her non-stereotypical representation of the domestic sphere – a venue of sociability rather than idleness and oppression – and to her challenging investigation of female authorship.

The present writer is here greatly indebted to both recent social history and sociologically oriented feminist criticism, as these schools of criticism made possible the articulation of the dialectic between her historical rootedness in accepted ideas as well as their radical revisions. Recent developments in social history facilitated the historical contextualisation of Oliphant's ideas on the domestic position of women – measured not so much against mid-twentieth century views as against the historical and cultural reality of her days. Leonore Davidoff's and Catherine Hall's recent social and intellectual history, *Family Fortunes* (1992) has been instrumental in establishing the contextual parameters for reading Oliphant's oeuvre. Their volume, discussing the period preceding Oliphant's formative years, provides numerous case histories and individual life stories from the early nineteenth century and therefore makes it possible to measure Oliphant's definitions of the home and the meaning of domesticity against the most commonly held beliefs of her own society. *Family Fortunes* helped to resolve the most difficult, yet probably the most essential task for any historian: that of differentiating the common, generally accepted, and often lived experience from the radical or retrograde. The Australian intellectual historian Barbara Caine's volume *Victorian Feminists* (1992) was essential in helping to understand both the power and the radical feminist potential of domestic ideology. These volumes provided the framework for the understanding of Oliphant's investigations of female domestic roles.

While recent developments in social history and feminist history have stirred interest in issues of domesticity and family structures and domestic existence, it was the momentous change caused by the rise of gynocriticism, or the study of women *as writers*, that has brought critical attention to the 'styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women', initially focusing on fiction, allegedly the chief site of feminist subversion or protest.²⁵ In 'Looking Forward: American Feminists, Victorian Sages,' Elaine Showalter reflects on recent developments in feminism and Victorian studies, commenting on the fact that feminist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s performed the historical task of 'recovering women's presence during the nineteenth century' and thereby legitimised the study of Victorian female writers – the import of which is obvious in the critical attention devoted to Oliphant as a novelist.²⁶ Yet this disciplinary development can also be extended to the examination

of her work as writer of non-fiction. But Showalter's and Ellen Moers's influence is also enormous in terms of establishing a sociologically driven critical *methodology* for writing the history of women's literature: they examined the career patterns and position of nineteenth century female authors in the literary marketplace, the impulse behind women's writing, and the social constraints enabling or disabling it, as well as the way in which female authors established a distinct female literary tradition. This methodological innovation can, in turn, be applied to the analysis of the literary activity and the investigation of female authorship by earlier female literary critics – Oliphant amongst them. Although in the present work the focus has shifted from Showalter's concept of stifled female creativity to active female agency, Showalter's and Moers's categories proved invaluable in examining Oliphant's work as an early example of literary sociology.²⁷ In Oliphant's final analysis, female writing subjects emerge as active, intersubjective and autonomous agents, who make legitimate claims upon their participation in the world of literature.

The final evaluation of Oliphant's achievement as an author here consistently interrogates her literary historical position and canonical potential. Some modern critics tend to read Victorian authors in search of their current historical relevance: these examinations often lead to the rediscovery of elements that coincide with our current critical and social concerns and 'timely implications.'²⁸ Yet reading Oliphant as original and radical *within* her own period allows us to see the coexistence of radicalism with historical embeddedness. In this reading, therefore, Oliphant is more often paradigmatic than exceptional: Oliphant is a significant author because her work is intimately associated with the literature of the Victorian era, and also because her achievement is so much the 'striking example of the professional woman of letters.'²⁹ Yet, at the same time, it is also arguable that the understanding of Oliphant's work as that of a characteristic author also allows us to evaluate how she was capable of the subversion of domestic role. Her work demonstrates the domestic and literary possibilities in the agency of the female author.

ENDNOTES

¹ Vineta and Robert Colby, *The Equivocal Virtue*, New York: Archon Books, 1966, xii.

² John Skelton, 'A Little Chat about Mrs. Oliphant,' *BM*, Jan. 1883. Quoted by Merryn Williams, *Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986, p. 51.

³ *Autobiography* (ed.), Elizabeth Jay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Henceforth: *JAL*

⁴ J. H. Lobban and William Blackwood, 'Mrs Oliphant,' *BM* 162 July, 1897, pp.161-2.

⁵ Barbara Caine, 'Feminism, Journalism and the Public Debate,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 99-118, esp. 99.

⁶ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995, p. 148.

⁷ For the debate on Oliphant's feminist credentials, see Merryn Williams, *Margaret Oliphant*; John Stock Clarke, *The novels of Margaret Oliphant*, Ph. D dissertation, University of Leicester, 1983; Ralph Jessop, 'Viragos of the Periodical Press: Constance Gordon-Cumming, Charlotte Dempster, Margaret Oliphant and Christina Isobel Johnstone' in Douglas Gifford and Dorothy Macmillan (eds.), *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997. pp. 216-231; Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Novelists*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996; Marion Shaw, 'Victorian Women Prose Writers,' in Arthur Pollard (ed.), *The Victorians*, New York: Peter Bedrick, 1987, pp.199-237.

⁸ Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001 and Nicola Diane Thompson, *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.

⁹ Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, xii

¹⁰ Beth Sutton-Rampseck, 'Mary Ward and the Claims of Conflicting Feminisms,' in Nicola Diane Thompson (ed.), *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 204-222. Quoted from p. 218.

¹¹ Bill Bell, Laurel Brake and David Finkelstein, 'Introduction,' in Bill Bell, Laurel Brake and David Finkelstein (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 1-7. Reference to p. 4.

¹² Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994, xi

¹³ Onslow, *Women*, p. 1 and F. D. Trendray, *The House of Blackwood: 1804-54*. Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1954.

¹⁴ Onslow, *Women*, p. 61.

¹⁵ Eliza Lynn Linton and Frances Power Cobbe were among the few notable exceptions.

¹⁶ Caine, 'Feminism,' p. 99.

¹⁷ J. S. Clarke, *Margaret Oliphant, 1828-1897: a Bibliography*, St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1986, and J. S. Clarke *Margaret Oliphant: Non-Fictional Writings*. St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1997.

¹⁸ Bell et al. 'Introduction,' p. 1.

¹⁹ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993, pp. 95-106; and Linda Peterson, 'Sage Writing,' in Herbert F. Tucker, *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 373-387.

²⁰ Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. A similarly encyclopaedic volume is Margaret Beetham's *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine: 1800-1914*, London: Routledge, 1996, which, regrettably, only deals with women's magazines, though very exhaustively.

²¹ Vineta and Robert Colby, *The Equivocal Virtue*, New York: Archon Books, 1966; Elizabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Joanne Shattock, 'Work for Women: Margaret Oliphant's Journalism,' in Bill Bell, Laurel Brake and David Finkelstein (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000, pp. 165-177.

²² Elizabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 97

²³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 13.

²⁴ Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing in the Domestic Sphere,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 119-141. Quoted from p. 132.

²⁵ Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,' *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981) reprinted in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, New York: Pantheon, 1985, p. 248.

²⁶ Thaïs Morgan, 'Introduction,' in Thaïs Morgan (ed.), *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990, pp. 1-18. Quoted from p. 3.

²⁷ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women*, London: Women's Press, 1978.

²⁸ Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 132.

²⁹ R. C. Terry, *Victorian Popular Fiction: 1860-1880*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983, p. 68.

CHAPTER TWO

SITUATING THE DOMESTIC WOMAN WRITER: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CONTEXT

Whenever it has been necessary, women have toiled, have earned money, have got their living, and the living of those dependent upon them, in total indifference to all theory [...] In all classes of society the existence of need has been the key which has opened spheres of labour to women.

Oliphant

‘The most remarkable woman of her time:’ Oliphant and her critics

‘Few great novelists are almost entirely forgotten, but this has been the fate of Margaret Oliphant’ wrote Merryn Williams, Margaret Oliphant’s first modern biographer, in 1986, and Oliphant has indeed suffered serious neglect until very recently.¹ A cursory glance at literary histories suggests that even when she is not entirely neglected she is dismissed as mediocre. At most, as J. H. Millar in his *Literary History of Scotland* (1903) claims, she deserves praise for her industry.² Even as late as 1980, Trevor Royle in his *Precipitous City* talks about her literary achievement in a condescending tone: ‘[s]he wrote too much too quickly, and with too little intellectual equipment to do her work justice.’³

While Oliphant may have been utterly ignored in the first half of the twentieth century, her reputation during her lifetime was of a different order. Margaret or *Mrs.* Oliphant, as she was then better known, was a renowned and high-powered literary lady of enviable popularity, not without an influential readership and social status. She was the ‘Queen of the circulating library,’ Darwin’s favourite novelist, and Queen Victoria’s personal friend whose art was highly valued by Carlyle and Tennyson alike.⁴ Her first, anonymously published novel, *Margaret Maitland* earned the praise of Lord Jeffrey in 1849, and during her lifetime she was often compared to Jane Austen, George Eliot and Trollope. Oliphant was highly popular, and, after the death of Mrs. Gaskell, she seemed to be the woman writer second only to George Eliot.⁵ Her mid-Victorian popularity, as evidenced by the generally flattering reviews of her work, survived the test of the late Victorian period as well: Stevenson, already an established writer, confessed that he cried on reading *The Beleaguered City*, and the reviewer of Oliphant’s earlier short novel, *The Two Marys*, not published until 1896, spoke flatteringly and unreservedly of her art as a novelist.⁶ Her skills as a non-fiction writer were also widely praised: Thomas Carlyle thought highly of Oliphant’s biography of Edward Irving, while J. H. Lobban and William Blackwood III, writing shortly after her death, described her as ‘the most accomplished periodical writer of her day.’⁷

Despite the popularity of her novels and critical acclaim of her work, however, dissenting voices were also heard during her lifetime, and these tended to have greater influence on her later reputation than the earlier, more favourable reviews. Oliphant was frequently accused of those feminine shortcomings which derived from the allegedly limited experience of the woman writer, such as the lack of familiarity with reading material for Non-conformist students in *Salem Chapel*.⁸ On other occasions, perhaps ironically, she was accused of a lack of morality and decorum. One critic of *The Son of his Father* objected to the fact that the father-figure of the novel was a criminal.⁹ More importantly, many critics emphasised that while her psychological realism was exemplary, her dramatic skills were somewhat deficient.¹⁰ Very often, it was her great prolixity that worked against her, and equally often critics assumed that it was mainly being so prolific as a writer that made her oeuvre so uneven.

Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, influential critics were attacking Oliphant not only for her real or assumed artistic weaknesses within the genre of domestic novels, but also because her preferred genre, the domestic novel, had come to be seen as increasingly dated. Wilde condescendingly declared that 'Mrs. Oliphant prattles pleasantly about curates, lawn-tennis parties, domesticity, and other wearisome things,' indicating that the aesthetics of the mid-Victorian period – those Victorian novels, domestic stories and three-deckers which secured Oliphant's critical and commercial success – were out of tune with the preferences of the late Victorian aesthetic movement.¹¹ What is significant in this context is that Oliphant was never merely the commercially-oriented authoress of three-deckers alone. Towards the end of her life and versatile career she wrote short stories, such as those included in her late volume *The Widow's Tale* (1886), whose concision, economy and intensity have stood the test of time and would certainly merit republication. Yet Wilde was not the only contemporary to hold such a condescending view of Oliphant. Henry James himself asserted his low opinion of Oliphant's writing in his obituary, first published in *Harper's Weekly* of 21 August 1897, by calling her the great 'improvisatrice.'¹² Thus, by the turn of the century, Oliphant's reputation was progressively downgraded to that of a lady novelist of limited literary merit whose work did not survive the changing aesthetic preferences of the time.

Oliphant the novelist was also immortalised by her male contemporaries in fiction – rather to her detriment. In *The Way We Live Now* (1875) Trollope's creation Lady Carbury was recognisably based on Oliphant in many details: the commercially successful authoress of domestic novels who cleverly and ruthlessly uses her still uncorrupted feminine charms to secure herself literary and commercial power. In his short story 'Greville Fane' (1892), Henry James also appears to represent Oliphant in the guise of Mrs Stormer, a mediocre author.¹³ The first-person narrator – a young journalist – is sent to Mrs Stormer's house to compose a notice of her death. While not disliking her as a person, the narrator talks of Mrs Stormer with distinct contempt. She is presented as a failure on all fronts: she is a vulgar widow who has been cruelly and ruthlessly exploited by her haughty and impudent children for ever-increasing sums of money. For this Mrs Stormer deserves little pity, as she has also committed the great sin of 'misconstructing' literature. For her, literature is a profession 'like another' [439] and she an author who has never recognised the 'torment of form' [438] but who has pursued literature as though it were a 'trade' which she could teach her ne'er-do-well son, but which she herself never acquired properly. In James's story the vulgarity of Mrs Stormer is linked to the vulgarity of her prose:

She was not a woman of genius, but her faculty was so special, so much a gift out of hand, that I have wondered why she fell below that distinction [...] She could invent stories by the yard, but she couldn't write a page of English. She went down to her grave without ever suspecting that though she contributed volumes to the diversion of her contemporaries she had not contributed a sentence to the language.¹⁴

The contemporary reader would at once have recognised that the heroine of the story, Mrs Stormer, was but a thinly-veiled version of Mrs Oliphant and that Oliphant was a talentless woman and a poor author whose prolixity had worked not only against her but also damaged the grand edifice of English letters.¹⁵

Henry James's views on Oliphant bear upon another issue as well, one that pertains not to Oliphant as a novelist, but to Oliphant as a non-fiction writer and literary critic. Towards the end of the century, her social and literary power as an arbiter of taste appeared even more intimidating and undeserved to male writers. Indeed, the very fact that Oliphant merited a parody is itself the testimony to her fame and power in the period. Oliphant's first major non-fiction effort, *The Life of*

Edward Irving (1862) attracted Carlyle's adulation and, indeed, her obituaries tended to speak with enthusiasm about Oliphant's achievement as a literary critic.¹⁶ That of Lobban and Blackwood suggests that 'it was nevertheless in periodical writing – the medium she loved best – that she attained perhaps her highest felicity of style.'¹⁷ And, while this comment could be read as an obligatory compliment to the hardest-working and most loyal contributor to the magazine by the editors, it is noteworthy that the reviewer of *The Edinburgh Review*, obviously not under the same obligation, commented that 'Mrs. Oliphant's work never fell below the level of the very best journalism.'¹⁸ *The Fortnightly*, similarly, offered unqualified praise for her journalism and her critical and biographical work.¹⁹ Yet not all the critics were as adulatory as Carlyle. George Eliot, for example, was critical of Oliphant's authority and competence in matters of judgement. Edith Simcox described a conversation between herself and Eliot, where Eliot talked about 'translations, ignorance in print, and the unprincipledness of even good people like Mrs Oliphant who write of that whereof they know nothing.'²⁰ In the same spirit Henry James not only satirised the mediocre authoress but also commented on her influential arbitrariness in the matter of good and bad in literature. In his view, no-one else had practised the art of literary criticism

more in the hit-or-miss fashion and on happy-go-lucky lines than Mrs Oliphant [...] no writer of the day found a *porte-voix* nearer to hand, or used it with an easier personal latitude and comfort. I should almost suppose in fact that no woman had ever, for half a century, had her personal 'say' so publicly and irresponsibly.²¹

James's comment on the influence of Oliphant the periodical reviewer and arbiter of literary taste foreshadows Thomas Hardy's view of the same matter. Hardy's comments are underscored by the same disdain of late Victorian male authors for the undue power accorded to a female critic. The details of the Oliphant-Hardy controversy are well-known: Oliphant's unsympathetic review of *Jude the Obscure* in *Blackwood's Magazine* revealed her antipathy to Hardy's representation of Jude, the puppet strung between two powerful, yet misogynistically represented women.²² Yet Hardy found Oliphant's person important enough to make her identifiable as 'the poor screaming lady' in his *Postscript to Jude* (1912), where he lists those authors who attacked his novel and thus eventually silenced him.²³ Hardy's accusation that Oliphant was insensitive and conservative was thus a backhanded compliment, as it

undoubtedly underscored the literary and critical power she possessed. Nevertheless, her reputation as a literary lady whose social say and literary power did not match the quality of her writing and her intellect, became early and firmly established.

The trend of exposing the darker side of *Eminent Victorians*, as Lytton Strachey put it in the title of his book (1918) was turned into simple historical oblivion during the twentieth century – a sad fact that may have been responsible for the pulping of her work during the war. Indeed, the dominant view of Oliphant before the second world war is acutely summarised by Ernest A. Baker, who devotes some ten pages to Margaret Oliphant in his *The History of the English Novel* (1939) and discusses her mostly as the author of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*, and whose novels were, at most, the minor and inferior versions of her greater contemporaries. As he says: ‘She is not to be ranked as anything more than a minor novelist, though her quiet humour gave her another distinction...[she is] a Mrs Gaskell who has learned a good deal from Dickens, and still more from Trollope. But Trollope, Mrs Gaskell, and Dickens were too original and too self-willed to be unduly hampered by the laws and regulations of the novels of commerce.’²⁴

No attempt to restore Oliphant’s reputation was made until 1966, when the Colbys published *The Equivocal Virtue*, the first modern study of Oliphant’s *oeuvre* with an emphasis upon her involvement in the Victorian publishing industry.²⁵ Although the book did not consider the fact that Oliphant was a *woman* writer in the marketplace (rather than a non-gendered author) and also perpetuated many of the prejudices that dogged her reputation, particularly in their low estimation of Oliphant’s stories of the supernatural, its context and conclusions still merit the critic’s attention. This book was soon followed by Q. D. Leavis’s reprint of *Miss Marjoribanks* (1969) and of the 1899 edition of Oliphant’s *Autobiography and Letters* (1974). The Leavisite impulse behind the re-editions is clear: it was an attempt to rediscover the missing link between Austen and Eliot, and to establish an additional female ‘great tradition.’²⁶ The major breakthrough, however, was brought about by Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of their Own* (1977), the founding volume of gynocriticism – not only a goldmine of factual information on long-forgotten female authors, but also a critical examination of their work from a sociological perspective, carefully considering the circumstances of authorship and the

representation of female experience. But even for the feminist criticism of the 1970s Oliphant's gender politics remained problematic, somewhat ironically, as her contemporaries had often found her female figures subversive, disobedient and self-willed. Nevertheless, her long-term ambivalence about women's rights wrought immense damage to her reputation, securing (for example) enough attention from Marion Shaw in her volume *The Victorians* to claim that Oliphant 'was no supporter of women's suffrage or the women's movement at all.'²⁷ Although Oliphant withdrew her ambivalence about women's suffrage in 1880 and although her other reservations about married women's employment and independent suffrage were shared by the majority of nineteenth century feminists, nevertheless her alleged antifeminism lingered on as a critical commonplace well into the twentieth century. The clearest evidence is provided by Valerie Sanders's consistent inclusion of Oliphant's work in her work on antifeminist women, most prominently in her volume *Eve's Renegades* (1996).²⁸ Her self-representation as a mother rather than a professional woman in her posthumous *Autobiography* (1899) emphasised her willingness to subordinate literary achievement to maternal duty, and it was lauded for its personal honesty on publication. For twentieth-century critics, this served to reinforce her reputation not only as a non-professional hack but also as an antifeminist, and the above-mentioned review of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, certainly helped to pigeonhole her as hopelessly conservative and unappreciative of Hardy's and the 'New Woman' writers' engagement with a truer representation of sexuality. The indelible marks left upon her reputation by her gender politics were not in the slightest alleviated by Virginia Woolf's well-meaning yet condescending comments on Oliphant's work and character in *Three Guineas* (1938), where she appreciated her human greatness, her industry and her self-sacrifice, yet declared that she had 'sold her brain,' and her view of Oliphant only emphasised the problematic nature of her career from a feminist perspective.²⁹

Despite the difficulties presented by Oliphant's gender politics for the reinstatement of her work into the feminist canon, Showalter's influential book provided the rationale for the continued rediscovery of Oliphant, and has been inspirational behind recent volumes which all are sensitive to the ways in which Oliphant's work was subversive of Victorian morality as generally accepted and the

stereotypical representations of the quasi-proverbial ‘Angel in the House.’ Some of this work has been biographical or literary biographical, or even bibliographical, introduced by helpful essays. In 1986, Merryn Williams published the first modern biography of Oliphant, which served as an important corrective to the biographical views held hitherto. Another excellent biographical book, also including sensitive readings of Oliphant’s fiction, was published in 1995 by Elisabeth Jay.³⁰ At least two doctoral dissertations following the biographical-literary model have also appeared.³¹ The laying of the groundwork has been successfully complemented by John Stock Clarke, who produced two indispensable bibliographies of Oliphant’s fiction and non-fiction.³² The present thesis provides an alternative research tool: the appendix lists her output in chronological order of writing. In addition to biographical portraits – whose survey nature is an inevitable consequence of the genre – some other useful work has been published recently. Margarete Rubik’s *The Novels of Mrs Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes* (1994) and D. J. Trela’s collection of essays *Margaret Oliphant: A Gentle Subversive* (1995) have done some justice to Oliphant’s credentials as a protofeminist and an original author of fiction.³³ Both of these volumes attempt to orient the Oliphant studies, primarily the studies of her fiction, in more theoretical directions. Rubik’s volume offers a general, thematic overview of Oliphant’s fiction. Her project is based on the theory that Oliphant’s representation of traditional Victorian themes is unique for its subtly elegant reworking of Victorian conventions and ‘the novel treatment of conventional motifs.’³⁴ Trela’s collection of essays gathers recent writing on Oliphant to do justice to her generic versatility. Some of these essays, such as Dale Kramer’s on Oliphant’s theory of domestic tragedy (‘The Cry that Binds: Oliphant’s Theory of Domestic Tragedy’), offer particularly useful insights into Oliphant’s aesthetic credo.³⁵

‘In the atlas of the English novel,’ as Showalter puts it in *A Literature of Their Own*, ‘women’s territory is usually depicted as a desert bounded by mountains on four sides: the Austen peaks, the Brontë-cliffs, the Eliot range and the Woolf-hills.’ (vii) Since Showalter’s book there have been efforts to explore the chain of development which includes Oliphant’s fiction. Yet, at the same time, the degree to which Showalter is indebted to an essentially modernist and also Leavisite tradition

of examining fiction as the only possible site of feminist or subversive ideas generated little insight into Oliphant's journalism and non-fictional writing. I have already commented on some of the criticism of her non-fictional writing: Carlyle's and the obituarists' eulogies on the one hand, on the other, on the low estimate of Oliphant the literary critic by modernist authors. Yet, in the 'atlas of English non-fiction writing,' (still to be compiled) there is still scope for tracing out women's – especially Victorian women's – non-fiction writing. To some extent, efforts have been made to map out the context in which Victorian non-fiction writers worked, as discussed in Chapter I (the work of Barbara Onslow, Thaïs Morgan and Linda Peterson being important from this perspective), but only limited attention has been paid to Oliphant's journalism. In fact only Mosier's doctoral dissertation (*Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*, 1967), and Joanne Shattock's various articles have attempted to analyse Oliphant's work as cultural and literary critic.³⁶ The present work is intended to provide further analysis of Oliphant's journalism, with respect to her representation of the domestic and the literary woman, two of the major subject positions or social roles that Oliphant envisioned for her female contemporaries. By analysing Oliphant's contribution to women's literature in general and to women's journalism in particular, the achievements will be revealed of a great author but also those of a great journalist.

Although a full-scale biography is not within the remit of this thesis, the task of assessing Oliphant's position on issues relating to family, female domestic roles and female authority is certainly assisted by a brief examination of her personal and intellectual background – perhaps typical rather than exceptional of mid-Victorian female authorship. Born in 1828 in Wallyford, near Edinburgh, Oliphant grew up in Scotland, and from 1838, in the expatriate Scots community of Liverpool. Though relatively well-educated, her family was lower middle class, with her father fulfilling minor positions in the Civil Service and her brothers preparing for the ministry. She grew up in an environment with a strong sense of family cohesion and intellectual ambition; in a family whose class, intellectual and social aspirations, and perhaps religious sensitivity (if not in an explicit, doctrinal sense) displayed great affinity with prevalent ideas of Evangelical Christianity. These very powerful notions, so influential in their time, established the context for the ongoing nineteenth century

debates on what could be called the 'woman question' in a wider sense: women's nature, appropriate activities, women's work and women's writing. The parameters of these debates help us understand Oliphant's particular position on the domestic and the writing woman.

'Her peculiar designation:' The legacy of the Enlightenment

In tracing the roots of Oliphant's major contentions about women's natural roles and female authority, it is vital to consider the legacy of Enlightenment concepts of gender upon the earlier and also the later Victorians. As is well-known, the Enlightenment concerned itself with the normative definition of subjectivity: a concept which underscores the best known pieces of writing in the field of political and social theory.³⁷ Social and political theorists of the Enlightenment defined reason as an ultimate characteristic of human beings, and this definition of humanity as being 'reasoning' underscores a large body of social and political thought prevalent during the Enlightenment. Yet, as feminist critics of Enlightenment political theory have often pointed out, reason was attributed to the male subject only, and so women, who were seen as failing to fulfil the axiomatic definition of humanity, were excluded from public achievement and political power, or, indeed, even from the rational perception of their domestic position.³⁸

What is often suppressed, however, is the fact that the definition of the political subject was only part of the larger sweep of defining human subjectivity. These definitions were not provided only by political and social scientists. As Barbara Caine and Ludmilla Jordanova convincingly argue, biological and medical writings of the Enlightenment had an equally high cultural status, a 'privileged epistemological position.'³⁹ These writings did not focus upon reason as a fundamental characteristic of humanity, but rather rooted their ideas in biological observations. Biological definitions resulted in an emphasis upon sexual difference, which was seen to determine the other, intellectual and psychological, differences between the sexes, and also their social roles. The interest in definitions privileging nature led to concepts of biological and concomitant psychological differences between the sexes, which influenced the concept of the gendered social sphere. The

concept of sexual difference was thus firmly established by the end of the eighteenth century, and Victorian concepts of domesticity were also rooted in Enlightenment redefinitions of the subject and his or her social world.⁴⁰

The complex legacy of Enlightenment ideas in the thinking of the Victorians necessitates the discussion of Mary Wollstonecraft's main work, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a text which has become not only the founding text of feminism, but also one that duly reflects Enlightenment theories of gender.⁴¹ Its Victorian readings provide an understanding of the extent to which Victorian beliefs in women's domestic role derived from Enlightenment ideas.

The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was, in the 1960s and 1970s, celebrated as an early exposition of women's equal mental worth with men, as a 'radical critique of established forms of femininity,'⁴² and as a manifesto expressing the need for women's political rights, for their civil liberties, for their education and for their equal participation in public matters.⁴³ As critics who have read the text with an eye to political rights and civil liberties have discovered, the starting point of Wollstonecraft's argument is the fundamental similarity between the sexes. She attributes reason – the most important characteristic of humanity – to women as well as men. She argues that women also are primarily 'human creatures' [79] and rational beings, and through this emphasis upon female rationality, she successfully challenges Rousseau's essentially biological definition of woman.⁴⁴ For Wollstonecraft, female reason is not only a mental quality; it is the key to private and public virtue. The redefinition of women as rational beings and therefore their fundamental similarity to men easily led generations of critics to assume that *all* of Wollstonecraft's women are advised to join men in the public realm, in order to exercise the same political and civil rights and practise the learned professions. Indeed, Wollstonecraft does suggest towards the end of her tract that '[w]omen might certainly study the art of healing and be physicians as well as nurses,' while other comments imply that their public activity should extend to the study of politics. [266] In other words, because of its emphasis upon sexual sameness, the text is often read as an argument for female citizenship being identical to male citizenship, for equal access by women to the public sphere and the professions.

Female public roles, however, play a relatively minor role in the text. Although the notions most consistently reiterated here are female reason and the denial of female unreason, of frivolity and of mental and moral inferiority, Wollstonecraft implies that rationality does not inevitably lead to participation in the public sphere. In the greater part of her text, Wollstonecraft associates the majority of women with the performance of domestic duty. This is not so much because of any particular biological difference; rather, it is the result of her belief in Divine Providence, which has rendered social organisation symmetrical by dividing it into the public and the private sphere, assigning differently sexed people into different spheres, into their 'proper places' [89] in society. In the case of women the 'proper place' is the domestic; this is where women can exercise their faculties in harmony with their 'peculiar designation.' [81] The role assigned to women is that of 'affectionate wives and rational mothers.' [79] Regular tasks for the middle class woman are 'govern[ing] the family with judgement' [83] and 'care of the poor babes' [83]; in other words, a domestic managerial and nurturing role. Domestic life is not only the natural sphere of activity for the great majority of middle class women – in harmony with their natural designation – but it is also the source of prestigious activity and, moreover, of authority. In Wollstonecraft's text, female authority is defined as essentially maternal authority in the family or, as Myers claims, 'the core of her manifesto remains middle-class motherhood, a feminist, republicanised adaptation of the female role normative in the late eighteenth-century bourgeois notions of the family.'⁴⁵

The emphasis in Wollstonecraft's text on female domestic roles was evident to the Victorians, despite the text's distinctly enlightened appeal to reason and to civic virtue. The affinity between Wollstonecraft's and the Victorians' ideas is perhaps most evident in George Eliot's review of Wollstonecraft's text. Eliot reviewed Wollstonecraft's book in tandem with that of Margaret Fuller in an essay entitled 'Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft' published in the *Leader* in 1855.⁴⁶ Eliot praises Wollstonecraft not only for her conviction that the sexes are rational in nature but, more importantly, she goes on to praise her 'strong sense and loftiness of moral tone,' [333] her female nature and 'the beating of a loving woman's heart, which teaches them not to undervalue the smallest offices of

domestic care and kindliness.’ [333]⁴⁷ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the prominent feminist, whose re-edition of *A Vindication* in 1891 brought the text back into the popular consciousness, also perceived similar, essentially Victorian virtues in the *Vindication*.⁴⁸ These readings suggest that Victorians found Wollstonecraft’s concept of morality similar to theirs, and celebrated her for the endorsement of female duty, domesticity and domestic commitment.

While Victorian readings of Wollstonecraft made obvious the potential affinity between her ideas and Victorian ones, Oliphant responded to another aspect of Wollstonecraft’s argument. Indeed, it seems that in the 1850s and 1860s Oliphant was not directly familiar with *The Vindication*, or perhaps cultural constraints forbade its public acknowledgement. This is not very surprising, given Wollstonecraft’s unconventional personal life, which was made public in Godwin’s *Memoir of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1798, doing immense damage to her reputation.⁴⁹ It is likely that Oliphant became familiar with Wollstonecraft’s ideas from fiction, the genre ultimately responsible for making her ideas accessible. Oliphant probably first encountered the literary representations of concepts of rationality and domesticity through reading Jane Austen’s novels and Susan Ferrier’s fiction. While Austen’s fiction may have served as inspiration for ideas on the plight of the single woman as well as for her beliefs about the similar moral nature of men and women, Ferrier’s *Marriage* (1818) in this context may easily have been ultimately responsible for exposing her to Enlightenment contentions about the rational and dutiful performance of female gender roles.⁵⁰ Oliphant, like Wollstonecraft, believed in female reason and denied female frivolity, as is evident in her early articles in *Blackwood’s* in the 1850s, where she challenged Dickens’s idealised representations of female characters. However, the most striking example of her indebtedness to the concept of rational woman as introduced by Wollstonecraft is to be found in Oliphant’s three-volume *The Literary History of England: 1790-1825* (1882), where she presented Wollstonecraft as part of her gallery of noble women.⁵¹ She acknowledged and praised Wollstonecraft’s feminism – although derived from personal offences from men she had grown to despise – and she praised *A Vindication* precisely for the expression of rationality and the

consideration of women as ‘human creatures, bound by the general laws of truth and honour.’[251]

‘Haven from the market:’ Domestic Ideology

While Wollstonecraft’s ideas may have provided an indirect source for Oliphant’s major contentions about women’s reason, domestic responsibility, and their authoritative position in domestic matters, her ideas may be responsible only in part for the views of Oliphant or indeed other Victorians. The formative influence upon Oliphant and other mid-Victorians derived, rather, from the domestic manifestos which formed the staple reading material of the middle classes of Oliphant’s generation, and the ethos of which permeated middle-class households. The early defining voices of domestic ideology – Sarah Lewis, Sarah Stickney Ellis and Mrs Sandford – published their works during Oliphant’s formative years, in the late 1830s and early 1840s. We have no evidence of her reading of these authors, yet the popularity of these tracts and books of advice on behaviour suggests that we can legitimately assume her familiarity with them, either directly or indirectly.

These conduct or etiquette books represented an important genre: not only were they instrumental in constructing Oliphant’s and her contemporaries’ ideas of women’s nature and social role, but they also provided a very influential analysis of the domestic arena, whose specific definition was an early nineteenth-century innovation. For Wollstonecraft, the private and the public were simply geographical or physical locations, while for ideologues of domesticity, the same social world subdivided into public and private spheres also carried moral attributes. The public was seen as evil, decadent, ‘indifferent, cynical or hostile,’⁵² and, generally, in need of moral salvation.⁵³ Public life was sinful not only in a theological sense, it was also seen as a disagreeably competitive, uncooperative and divisive venue, where ‘violent dissensions...[are] engendered by public strife.’⁵⁴ The domestic, however, was diametrically opposed to that: it was seen as the only ideal venue free from the pervasive influence of sin and corruption: home was the ‘haven from the market,’ the site of peace, confidence and unity, where proper moral life was conducted.⁵⁵ This

clear-cut division of the social spheres also underscores Oliphant's vision of social organisation in her *Blackwood's Magazine* articles in the 1850s.

Sexual difference (and the fact of a sexual hierarchy) was one of the dominant themes in tracts of domestic ideology: indeed, one of the most salient features of these tracts is that they describe the vision of sexual difference accurately; this was, in turn, to become the cornerstone of Victorian beliefs about male and female nature. In fact, one of the purposes of these tracts is to popularise these notions, and their frequent reissue shows that the enterprise was successful. There is very little known about their authors: Mrs John Sandford, the least accomplished of them, is known for a single work, *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (1831). Sarah Lewis, the author of *Woman's Mission* (1839) was well known in Episcopalian circles, her book being the translation and adaptation of Louis Aime Martin's influential volume *De l'éducation des mères de famille, ou la civilisation du genre humain par les femmes* (1834). Sarah Stickney Ellis published a number of well written tracts on women's domestic and social role and practical advice books on evangelical education.⁵⁶ These authors are very different from each other, yet one of the views they share is the nature of sexual difference, even if their emphases varied. They all agreed about women's biological inferiority. Significantly, however, and somewhat embarrassingly for the twentieth century reader, they also accepted the idea that biological inferiority means mental inferiority. Sandford considered women's powers 'subordinate powers.' [63] For her, women's mental inferiority consisted in a 'constitutional' instability [30] and the lack of 'originality and strength requisite for the sublime.' [12] For Sarah Lewis, despite the exalted tone of her tract, mental inferiority was also an unquestionable truth. For Sarah Stickney Ellis, mental inferiority was less explicit; nevertheless, she too subscribed to the idea of a sexual hierarchy and women's general inferiority. Yet what they all agree on is that women were more capable of nurture, and that women possessed moral superiority. Oliphant was probably no avid reader of these conduct books, yet by her formative years these ideas had lost their special Evangelical flavour and had become the common-sense views of gender for the British middle classes. The importance of these ideas is apparent for Oliphant in the discussion of specifically sexed gender roles in her early articles in *Blackwood's Magazine*, such as 'The Laws Concerning Women' in 1856

and 'The Condition of Women' in 1858, where she consistently returns to the modes of sexual difference between men and women.

The definition of the home is central to these conduct books. It was regarded, as Davidoff and Hall put it, as the 'basis for a proper moral order in the amoral world of the market,' yet women's relationship to the home differed from that of men to it.⁵⁷ For men, who lived in both spheres, the home was the site of rest. For women, according to these authors, the domestic sphere was by no means the site of rest or idleness; rather, it was the centrally important sphere of activity, responsibility and labour. Following the new doctrines of femininity, the new female subject is the 'godly wife and mother,' supervising the religious education of the children and generally managing the Christian household, and her labour emphasised the fact that women's contribution was a valuable one. In these tracts, the analysis of maternal duty is paramount. It did not consist solely of practical duties, but its chief aim was the inculcation of virtue into children. Sandford, although devoting only limited space to maternal duties, argues for the importance of maternal duty as well as its moral character: '[t]he most anxious, however, if not the most important duty of married life is that which is due to children, and which, in their early years, principally devolves upon the mother [...] the mother is the [...] best guardian and instructress.' 167] Sarah Stickney Ellis's *Education of the Heart* is entirely devoted to the elaboration of maternal duties.⁵⁸ Thus the moral instruction of future generations is in the mother's hands, which endows them with significance, primarily in the domestic sphere, and perhaps – indirectly – in the public sphere too. In this work, Ellis emphasises the 'training of the desires of the heart' and good faith. This is put to the service of society: maternal education gains its significance from raising the virtuous adult, which in itself is but the result of spreading Christian morality. Although Ellis argues that the purpose of education is social life, and that children should be prepared for a 'life of strife' [49] which is characteristic of the contemporary social world, yet at the same time she also stresses that during the early stages of education the preparation for strife should give way to the preparation for life eternal: unselfishness, a sense of 'pity and gratitude' should be instilled in infants and this should be done by the person in charge of the domestic sphere, the mother. [109] For Oliphant, the mother's (or the surrogate mother's) role as key to

the moral education of the young, is undeniable, and it is particularly important in her early fiction depicting real mothers and spinsters fulfilling maternal functions.

In these texts female domestic labour complements the analysis of maternal labour. The middle class domestic woman had a 'key management role' in the organising of the Christian household.⁵⁹ This is particularly well illustrated in the oeuvre of Sarah Stickney Ellis.⁶⁰ Her *Women of England* provides a detailed account of the useful domestic labour performed by women. The very term might sometimes be just a 'fine-sounding phrase'⁶¹ to conceal menial labour, yet Ellis is careful to distinguish the labour of the middle class woman from the drudgery of the domestic servant. Household management and the superintendence of the domestic servants is best dramatised in the four chapters of the *Women of England*, called 'Domestic Habits-Consideration and Kindness'. As an extended passage about the arrival of a visitor explains, the domestic woman's chief responsibility is to organise the household. Because of the lack of preparation and poor planning, a domestic chaos ensues upon a visitor's arrival, which causes the mistress embarrassment, and the 'harassed and forlorn appearance of an overworked domestic' [202] does not make the process any easier. As this passage demonstrates, the household is not the site of uselessness and idleness, as the 'fairy order' [196] – the essence of a well-run middle-class household – is created as a result of the work by the domestic woman.

Conduct books were indeed instrumental in disseminating the idea that the household is the site of meaningful and socially significant labour, and their far-reaching influence can be seen in the deployment of similar motives of female household management in, say, Dickens's *Bleak House* or the detrimental effects of the lack of it in *David Copperfield*. In Oliphant's work, as will be seen in Chapter Three with reference to her novel *The Athelings*, there is a similar emphasis upon the responsibilities of the domestic woman and mother: the essence of maternal moral responsibility springs less from religious education and more from class-based, civic morality. The responsibility of the mother as housekeeper and key manager in the process of the social semiotic of middle-class existence is indeed paramount.

To 'reconcile this dismal progress with nature:' women's work

The content and, indeed, the very existence of these books raises other issues in the early debate on the woman question in the 1840s and 1850s: issues of woman's work (always used in the sense of paid employment outside the home) and woman's writing.⁶² Both of these issues occupied a central place in mid-Victorian social debate: woman's work was closely linked with the rapid industrial and social changes taking place in mid-Victorian society, while women's writing and publishing was a palpable fact in mid-Victorian Britain. Both of these cultural and social debates were profoundly steeped in the pervasive influence of domestic ideology, and their spectra are important to the understanding of Oliphant's particular position as a writer and an agent in the debates.

The question of women's work, particularly factory work, came to prominence in the 1840s, and the second, wider debate on women's work concerning the employment opportunities of the impecunious gentlewoman, (known as the 'superfluous woman' debate), came to the fore in the 1850s, culminating in the 1860s in the debates about opening up the professions to women. It seems that Ellis's (very limited) universe was distanced from these debates, although she wrote most of her work in the 1840s; her target audience was the lower genteel classes.⁶³ Yet Ellis's conduct books are significant in one respect: they rely on the implicit assumption that the division of labour between individuals is gendered according to the separate spheres doctrine, and while women perform their maternal role and housekeeping labour in the domestic realm, it is men who provide from the financial angle.

Economic realities, however, often did not allow the fulfilment of these cultural imperatives; women needed paid employment. The reasons for the economic need for women's work differed slightly from class to class: in the case of the working classes, this need was caused by the low earning potential of all earners, while in the case of the middle classes, it was the absence of an earning male that necessitated paid employment – '[a]t the level of financial need, their anxieties clearly overlapped.'⁶⁴ The process of industrialisation had also aggravated matters, as it had already deprived the domestic venue of its financially productive capacity:

work was industrialised and public. The tension between these two factors – woman's place is in the home, yet she needed to secure her economic survival, and even to move out of the home if economic necessity so dictated – underscored the mid-nineteenth century debates on women's paid employment. This made the question of reconciling the demands of femininity and the need for economic survival immensely difficult and the subject of extended negotiations.

In the 1840s, the focus of the work debate was the plight of the factory woman. The position of the working class woman during 'the hungry forties' was brought to public attention partly by parliamentary reports, and partly by Disraeli, Dickens and others novelists. Thomas Hood's 'The Song of the Shirt' (1842) described the plight of the overworked needlewoman, the silent victim of circumstance, while Henry Mayhew's interviews with London seamstresses described the miserable situation of the working woman.⁶⁵ It is no accident that these examples reflect the industrialisation of traditional female domestic labour. It is precisely because this debate was generally conducted by middle class voices and pens that the plight of the factory woman appeared to reflect middle-class perceptions and domestic ideology. This was also true of the later spinster debate.

There was a wide spectrum of opinion on the plight of these women. There were distinct voices commenting on female work in the factories, and the existence of female labour at that point could not be denied. Economic liberals wished to keep out of the debate, suggesting that women's right to work and employers' right to set the hours of work should be spared governmental intervention; indeed, they denied the right of the government to legislate for private enterprise.⁶⁶ Protectionists, however, suggested that women should be protected from the excesses of industry. Lord Ashley, in 1844, delivered an impassioned speech before the House of Commons, describing the miserable lives of overworked factory women and called for the limitation of women's working hours in order to protect women and their children from the harmful effects of labour. Significantly, he highlights the way in which industrialisation and the separation of women from their natural environment disturbs the order of nature:

Sir, under all the aspects in which it can be viewed, this system of things must be abrogated or restrained.[...] It disturbs the order of nature, and the rights of the labouring men, by ejecting the males from the workshop,

and filling their places by females, who are thus withdrawn from all their domestic duties, and exposed to insufferable toil at half the wages that would be assigned to males, for the support of their families. [...] thrift and management are altogether impossible[...]everything runs to waste; the house and children are deserted; the wife can do nothing for her husband and family; she can neither cook, wash, repair clothes, or take charge of the infants.⁶⁷

Charlotte Tonna, the editor of the *Christian Ladies Magazine*, argued from the same, 'woman's sphere' perspective. For her, the task of woman is 'to preside over her own home, and to promote the welfare of her own family.'⁶⁸ In other words, industrial protectionists of women argue from the separate spheres corner, blaming the existing working conditions of women upon the industrial revolution and proposing the curtailment of women's working hours in order to restore them to their homes.

Yet while protectionists argued for the restoration of women to their homes by suggesting legislative remedies for overwork, at the same time their suggestions did not resolve the problem of how working class women were to support themselves economically. It is interesting to consider another voice, that of Anna Jameson, who had by 1843 established her reputation as the author of 'Woman's Mission and Woman's Position.' Her argument differs from the previous ones in that Jameson recognized that restoring working class women to the domestic realm would not resolve their economic plight:

Is she, therefore, a born monster? she *must* live: to live, she *must* work, and make her children work as soon as they can use their little hands. We may shudder, and talk of the necessity of taking away the children to educate them, but by what right will you take the food out of the mother's mouth, procurable by no other means than through her own and her children's perpetual toil?⁶⁹

Jameson's argument highlighted the irreconcilable facts: while women's role in their families is inevitable, nevertheless, both women and their families need their wages.

Debates about the situation of the impecunious, unsupported gentlewoman, obliged by circumstance to work as a governess, were conducted in literary periodicals, at least partly because both the writers as well as the subjects of the debate belonged to the middle classes. Arguments about middle class women's employment could be ranged along the same paradigm as the working class debate. They were born out of the tension between the domestic ideal and economic necessity. Indeed, it has been customary to differentiate between the impulse behind

the working class and the middle class debate by arguing that while the labour of the working class woman was motivated by economic necessity, middle-class women were rather inspired partly by an idealistic Carlylean desire to work and partly by an intention to gain 'equal professional and financial opportunities with men.'⁷⁰ But for most women in the nineteenth century the sense of self was not determined by an 'occupational identity' but by a domestic-private relational one, and therefore this call to labour was applied to domestic work.⁷¹ The middle class debate therefore focused upon the tension between women's ideal domesticity and economic necessity, just as did the previous one.

The middle class woman's work debate raged in the 1850s. It was primarily provoked by the superabundance of females, a well-documented fact, publicised by the 1851 Census.⁷² Its proportions were impressive: largely caused by excessive (middle class) male emigration to the colonies which radically limited the number of eligible middle class men, leaving 42 % of women between the ages of 20 and 40 unmarried.⁷³ Female superabundance was discussed widely and openly in periodicals, and the position of the middle class spinster was commonly perceived as profoundly problematic in an economic sense. The question was, significantly, not so much how the world of work could be opened up to women (this would be a twentieth-century perspective), but rather: how the unmarried gentlewoman should support herself. This question provoked two entirely different sets of responses. The liberal industrialist W. R. Greg in his article 'Why are women redundant?' in the *National Review* of April 1862, suggested that the unmarried women should be safely married off to the male immigrants in the colonies.⁷⁴ This 'simple expedient' of encouraging of female emigration to the colonies was the means of restoring the desired balance between the sexes.⁷⁵ This would be a solution beneficial to the colonies as well as to Britain, he argued, as it would provide the missing husbands for British women, while it would supply the celibate male colonists with wives. Female critics such Bessie Rayner Parkes, Francis Power Cobbe, Barbara Bodichon and H. Martineau, argued differently.⁷⁶ Cobbe's suggestion, in her article 'What shall we do with Our Old Maids?' (Nov 1862) lacked messianic zeal.⁷⁷ She proposed education for women, so that they could become part of the marketable workforce. But she argued that the proposed education was useless without the necessary change

in the labour market, without curtailing the excesses in trade in general. Bessie Rayner Parkes, in a similar spirit, suggested opening up the professions to women, arguing that they should be educated and permitted to earn their bread.

How did Oliphant respond to this tension between normative domesticity and the practical need for female employment? Oliphant's participation in the debates expresses her general concern within the framework of domestic ideology, but the clear expedient of women's work also seemed to her undeniable. Oliphant's opinions in the working class woman debate and the spinster debate are articulated in her articles 'The Condition of Women,' and 'Social Science' in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1858 and in 1860. In the 1858 article she expressed the classic economic liberal view of the position of the working class woman: 'If female work, which is always so much cheaper, is available in such a quantity as to enter into real competition with the work of men, we may safely trust the employers of Great Britain to know their own interests; if it is not, no sentiment is likely to have the slightest effect upon them.'⁷⁸ The article in 1860, however, represents a more sympathetic and more pragmatic point of view. She presents the position of the female mechanic in dramatic colours: her plight derives from a sense of dislocation, from her 'nomadic' position.⁷⁹ In addition, once she is married, her employment in the labour market is inappropriate, Oliphant suggests, as she would be unable to take on the double burden of domestic labour *in addition* to her work in the factory.⁸⁰ Workshops, indeed, 'disable a woman from her natural office.'⁸¹ Nevertheless, it appeared that she was unable or unwilling to consider the economic problem. However, interestingly, her position on middle-class women's employment displays a great degree of affinity with the feminist position. While not denying the importance of the domestic ideal, she nevertheless tentatively suggested securing employment opportunities. This is most evident in her article 'Social Science' (December, 1860), where she recommends, as second best after the attractions of the domestic circle, the establishment of celibate working communities, 'common dwelling' modelled upon monastic communities, where superabundant middle-class women could teach working class women the forgotten 'homely household arts.' [714]

‘She is ploughing it in all directions already:’ women’s writing

For the needy domestic gentlewoman, there were in fact very few socially accepted occupations to secure her livelihood, and most social historians agreed that dressmaking, governessing and teaching appeared the most suitable ones. By the 1850s these were by far the biggest occupational categories listed for middle class women.⁸² To this list might be added writing – an occupation that suited women on various grounds. For one thing, writing could be carried out within the domestic sphere in just the same way as other, traditionally feminine activities. Moreover, domestic novels, which were in the process of becoming an established genre in the 1830s and 1840s, were rooted in precisely the same material which female authors rightly felt they had sufficient experience to describe.

Professional authorship – in the sense of a serious commitment to writing – had been practised by women since the beginning of the nineteenth century, although ‘often posing as amateurs, in an attempt to negotiate gendered discursive boundaries, and often disclaiming professional credentials.’⁸³ Other twentieth century literary historians also confirm this fact. Harriet Devine Jump, for instance, concluded that about twenty percent of the total number of practising writers in the nineteenth century were female.⁸⁴ But it was not only twentieth-century statistics that showed this fact – a cursory look at early and mid-nineteenth-century literary histories already shows not only a great number of female authors but also their awareness of each other’s presence. The number of biographical dictionaries, anthologies and retrospective assessments and other reference sources to female-authored literature – ranging from Mary Hay’s *Female Biography: or Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women of All Ages* (1803) and Mary Matilda Betham’s *A Biographical Dictionary of the Celebrated Women of every Age and Country* (1804) to Anna Katherine Elwood’s *Memoirs of Literary Ladies of England* (1843) – suggests that female authorship was commonly practised and also publicly acknowledged.⁸⁵ No wonder that when Frances Power Cobbe discussed women’s employment opportunities she could claim that there is ‘little need to talk of literature as a field for woman’s future work. She is ploughing it in all directions already.’⁸⁶

While writing could be conducted from the domestic sphere, there were none the less a variety of complications. First, the professional remuneration of women's labour caused problems, as Davidoff says, writing of Ann and Jane Taylor. The Taylor sisters 'had received small lump sums of £5 to £10 for their early work, although sometimes they were also paid in gifts of fish or fruit. Their ambivalence about professional authorship is seen in the proud claim that they never stipulated a price for their work, leaving it to their publishing "friends."' ⁸⁷ But by the 1830s other problems related to female writing were coming to the fore: the genre in which the woman writer ought to write, how existing critical norms evaluated the work produced by the female author, and what authorial identity the female author should assume.

Some genres appeared more suited to women's writing than others. The activity of women as playwrights has recently been the subject of many critical disagreements, yet it is arguable that women playwrights whose work was actually performed were less highly valued, even though this is the social equivalent of published authorship. ⁸⁸ Some branches of poetry were deemed less suitable than others. As Mellor explains, 'the derivation of poetic and dramatic forms from classical models might locate the genres of poetry and drama within the public sphere of the masculine gender.' ⁸⁹ Yet women's contributions to lyrical and Romantic poetry were highly appreciated. It is enough to think of the critical acclaim (though with some reservations on the 'dangers' of the spontaneous expression of emotions) accorded to the work of Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and Caroline Norton. ⁹⁰ For Oliphant, however, women's poetry did not appear to hold much fascination, despite a few early attempts at the genre: 'The Christian Night's Vigil' in 1850, and some in the 1860s published in *Blackwood's*. Her interest in the poetry of female contemporaries was also limited: in spite of the high reputation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her lifetime, Oliphant commented only very briefly on her poetry in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1856. ⁹¹ Characteristically, she did not include Barrett Browning in her series 'A Century of Great Poets' in *Blackwood's* in the 1870s, while her discussion of Barrett Browning's work in *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892) is careful to point out that no woman poet can possess the 'genius.' ⁹²

While women's poetry often involved the thorny issue of the potentially uncontrollable expression of sentiment, genres such as autobiographical writing, religious and children's literature, domestic fiction, and periodical writing appeared to contemporaries more suited to the middle-class woman.⁹³ For the most part, critics admired writing by women when it formed an extension of women's domestic role, and were in harmony with what was perceived and generally accepted as the distinctively different psychology of women. The normal contours of woman's experience as dictated by domesticity – 'incidents and associations of everyday life' – and the expanding genres also encouraged female self-expression in those genres.⁹⁴ As the abundance of private spiritual records attest, leaving behind a private spiritual record was regarded very much as a test of Christianness, and the domestic novel, with its representation of self-sacrificing characters, the sanctity of the family and domestic harmony, provided appropriate topics.⁹⁵ Domestic realism had already been established in the 1830s, and women seemed to have a particular gift for writing about domestic matters. According to Newey, women made up between 35% and 50% of novelists in the nineteenth century, including well-known figures such as Mrs Gore, Harriet Martineau, and Charlotte Yonge.⁹⁶ Victorian publishing practice, the embracing of anonymity in particular, were particularly suited to the female author. These factors – the essential fit between the middle-class domestic woman and the genre of fiction – suggest that for Oliphant the author the writing of novels was a particularly suitable activity. Her awareness that it is natural for women to write fiction is also evident in her early reviews of women's fictional output in the 1850s, when she unabashedly suggests a natural affinity between women and fiction. This will be taken up in Chapter Four.

While writing domestic novels was a suitable activity for the female author, she still had to be careful to provide a balanced picture within the novels. Displaying unbecoming knowledge, or writing something clearly above second-rate, was clearly inappropriate and seen as 'strong-mindedness.'⁹⁷ The pretentious display of knowledge – and, considering the lack of women's formal education, virtually any display of knowledge could only be pretentious – was also deemed unbecoming to women. Yet it was not only the presumptuousness of ambition which was disallowed in female writers; women were perceived as having creative limitations. R. H.

Hutton, in an essay for the *North British Review*, described women's inability to represent men as the obvious indication of the lack of creative imagination:

It may seem a harsh and arbitrary dictum, that our lady novelists do not usually succeed in the field of imagination [...] Yet we are fully convinced that this is the main deficiency of feminine genius. It can observe, it can recombine, it can delineate, but it cannot trust itself farther; it cannot leave the world of characteristic traits and expressive manner[...] Thus no woman, we believe, has ever painted men as they are amongst men. Their imagination takes no grasp of a masculine character that is sufficiently strong to enable them to follow it in imagination into the society of men.⁹⁸

There were thus other weaknesses inherent in women's writing. Another such consisted of the lack of 'that largeness and universality which alone compels attention and preserves a work through all the changes of sentiment and opinion.'⁹⁹ As this aesthetic inferiority was seen to derive directly from the sex of the author, it is not surprising that a number of female authors resorted to the assumption of a male persona – a fact that may, in itself, have proved detrimental to the critical appreciation of women's writing, at least in the short term. It is interesting to observe the idea of the inherent second-rateness of women's literature, that it was a concept internalised by even seasoned critics like Margaret Oliphant, as evidenced by her early reviews of women's writing in *Blackwood's*. For her, as for her many contemporaries, it is evident that women authors are second-rate only by comparison with male authors. This underlines her agreement with the common critical assumption that there is one single standard of literary excellence, and that single standard cannot be reached by female authors.

Domestic fiction was not the only literary genre to offer an outlet for creative talents as well as a livelihood for the domestic woman. Journalism and other fields of non-fiction writing also belonged to those emerging fields in which women could practise their professional writing. Journalism, just like fiction, could be pursued from within the domestic environment, with the limited educational capital at women's disposal; the number of outlets for such work were proliferating, and some genres of periodical writing were just as domestic as domestic novels. Travel writing and the history of art, or the history of female sovereigns, offered particularly suitable writing territory to middle class women, and the 'Woman Question' itself, coming to the forefront of interest in the middle of the nineteenth century, was also

an area in which female competence was difficult to challenge. Literary reviewing, as the number of female critics suggests, was also an area in which women could excel.¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that all the branches of non-fiction prose were open to women, nor that such ostensibly serious and masculine fields as political economy and history necessarily remained mostly outside the female domain. Nor is it to say that women did not appear as popularisers of knowledge, rather than original contributors, while the number of female non-fiction writers for the rapidly proliferating journals and periodicals suggested that writing fiction and writing for periodicals were both suitable for women. This acceptability of women's participation in non-fictional discourses is also evident in Oliphant's contribution to the burgeoning field of women's journalism, and the areas in which she excelled – art history, the history of female sovereigns, and literary history (see Chapter Five) – show her intensive involvement with all the fields of writing.

Literary careers, then, were available to the domestic woman, although with professional and critical limitations. It was, none the less, rather difficult to establish an authorial identity and critical and literary space in which to write. In order to achieve this, they had to draw on one of the models of social and cultural identity then available, and the best appeared to be what Helsinger terms the 'Angel out of the House.' Its metaphorical ancestress, the Angel in the House, later to be immortalised by Coventry Patmore's poem (1863), was defined by her self-sacrificial nature expressed through her domestic benevolence, while the 'Angel out of the House,' extended benevolence to spheres beyond her home: she defined her duty as 'ministering to the needs of the world at large.'¹⁰¹ This was the image embraced by Sarah Lewis's *Woman's Mission*, which defined woman's role as that of a missionary in the process of improving the world. Female authors often embraced this image when legitimising their authorship. Instead of defining their work as a result of a 'will to write', as an act of self-expression or an attempt at self-definition by self-exploration, they defined their writing as fulfilling an act of womanly duty, or even more broadly, of social duty.

In this light it is interesting to return to Sarah Stickney Ellis, and to other domestic ideologues to examine their own interpretation of writing. Their prolific and self-conscious activity as writers presupposes the need for self-interpretation, yet

their willingness to define themselves as writers differed widely. Ironically, Wollstonecraft, who was well-known as an author and journalist, did not comment in the *Vindication* either on her own authorship or on writing as a paid occupation for women. Moreover, she clearly associated female novel reading with frivolity, although by the time of writing this she had herself written a novel.¹⁰² The effects of the commercialisation of literature and the consequences of the notion of inherent female benevolence are perceivable in Sandford's work, who, although in a profoundly apologetic tone, did talk about literary pursuits. Female reading was no longer a sign of female frivolity; rather, it is accepted, even if mostly as a weapon against sinful idleness, as the best of all 'the usual ways of getting rid of time.' [25] The scholar woman, on the other hand, appeared an embarrassing creature in her boudoir, who may, regrettably, be inspired by desire for reputation and fame. In her account, the pursuit of literature by her female contemporaries 'is often indulged from the mere wish of being eccentric, and of attracting more than ordinary notice.' [69] Mindful of the dangers she perceived in the pursuit of fame, she was careful to define her own writing strictly in terms of fittingness and appropriateness: 'It at least embraces a subject which will be regarded as strictly appropriate to a female pen; and it is hoped that this circumstance may be admitted as at once an apology and a recommendation.'¹⁰³ While Sandford's stance appears to be uniquely reticent, Sarah Stickney Ellis was a more self-conscious and infinitely more prolific author, and appears have no reservations about her own writing. As the number of her books increased, she became increasingly self-assured about her own status as a writer. Yet she was somewhat ambiguous about the public exposure involved in publicity: fame, for her, was also a 'dazzling degradation.' [Daughters, 296] Nevertheless, she did write more than a few volumes of tracts and conduct books and, as she was careful to emphasise in the 'Preface' to *The Wives of England*, she was not pursuing writing because she was the most able of writers, but because she was a 'friend and a sister' in the writing community. [v] In other words, Ellis emphasised that her writing was not driven by the desire for self-expression but by an assumed communality between herself and her readership. Domestic femininity, as in Ellis's writing, can be extended to the female author, and the idea of service can be fruitfully presented not only to family members but also to the general public. It is this idea of writing for the

public and the social good that characterised mid-Victorian female authors' self-interpretation, and Oliphant also embraced the same idea: writing is a producer of social cohesion.

ENDNOTES

¹ Merryn Williams, *Women in the English Novel: 1800-1900*, London, 1984, p. 159, cited by Margarete Rubik, *The Novels of Mrs Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes*, New York: Peter Lang, 1994, p. 5.

² J. H. Millar, *Literary History of Scotland*, London: Unwin, 1903, p. 613.

³ Trevor Royle, *Precipitous City: The Story of Literacy in Edinburgh*, Edinburgh: Mainstream, p. 153. Cited by Dale Trela, 'Introduction,' D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995, pp. 11-31. Quoted from pp. 12-13.

⁴ Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: 'A Fiction to Herself'*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 1.

⁵ Lord Jeffrey's letter is included in the *Autobiography and Letters of Mrs Margaret Oliphant*, edited by Mrs Coghill, Leicester: Leicester UP, 1974, pp. 171-173.

'Saturday Review,' 23 July, 1870, p. 117.

⁶ R. L. Stevenson to Margaret Oliphant, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, edited by Bradford A Booth and Ernest Mehew, New Haven and London: Yale UP, vol. 2. 1994, p. 30. Review of 'The Two Marys' *The Spectator*, July 25, 1896, p. 119.

⁷ J. H. Lobban and William Blackwood, 'Mrs Oliphant' *BM* 162 Jul 1897, p. 162.

⁸ *Nonconformist* 25 Feb. 1863. Cited by Rubik, *The Novels*, p. 7.

⁹ *Spectator* 16 July 1887, p. 963.

¹⁰ 'Men and Letters,' *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (1897), pp. 424-427, reference to p. 424.

¹¹ Oscar Wilde, *Intentions*, London: Methuen and Co, 1927, pp. 9-10.

¹² Henry James's obituary of Oliphant, printed in *Harper's Weekly*, and reprinted in *London Notes*, August 1897. The citation is taken the following edition: 'London Notes,' in Henry James, *Essays, American and English Writers*, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984, pp. 1411-1413. Quoted from p. 1411.

¹³ Henry James, 'Greville Fane,' in *Complete Tales of Henry James* 1891-92. Vol. 8. Rupert Hart-Davis 1963, pp. 433-452.

¹⁴ James, 'Greville Fane,' p. 436.

¹⁵ Jay asserts the identification between Lady Carbury and Margaret Oliphant. (Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, pp. 37-38)

¹⁶ Jane Welsh Carlyle's letter to Margaret Oliphant, NLS, 23210. 183-84. Cited by D. J. Trela, 'Margaret Oliphant's "bravest words yet spoken" on Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle' in *The Carlyle Annual* 18, 1998, pp. 153-166, reference to p. 159.

¹⁷ Lobban-Blackwood, 'Mrs Oliphant,' p. 162.

¹⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'The Life and Writings of Mrs Oliphant,' *ER* (190) Jul 1899, pp. 26-47. Quoted from p. 26.

¹⁹ Annie L. Coghill, 'Mrs Oliphant,' *Fortnightly Review* (68) August 1897, pp. 277-285. Quoted from p. 280.

²⁰ George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, edited by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. New Haven, CT and London. Quoted by Joanne Shattock. 'Work for Women: Margaret Oliphant's Journalism,' in Bill Bell, Laurel Brake and David Finkelstein, (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000, pp. 165-177. Quoted from p. 167.

²¹ James, *London Notes*, p. 1411.

²² 'The Anti-Marriage League' *BM* Jan 1896, pp. 135-149.

²³ Thomas Hardy, Postscript to the Preface to *Jude the Obscure*. New York: Norton and Co, 1978, p. 7.

²⁴ Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel*, New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1939, p. 200.

²⁵ Robert and Vineta Colby, *The Equivocal Virtue*, New York: Archon Books, 1966.

²⁶ Her *oeuvre* benefited from the reevaluation in two ways: partly, at least some volumes of her enormous body of writing – approximately 250 volumes – have been republished, mostly amongst the popular volumes of the *Virago Classics* during the 1970s, and her supernatural short stories have since been routinely included in anthologies of fantastic tales.

²⁷ Marion Shaw, 'Victorian Women Prose Writers,' in Arthur Pollard (ed.), *The Victorians*, New York: Peter Bedrick, 1987, pp. 199- 237. Quoted from page 221.

²⁸ Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Novelists*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996.

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, London: Hogarth, 1938, pp. 165-6.

³⁰ Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Margaret K. Gray *The Fiction of Margaret Oliphant*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1979, and J. S. Clarke, *The Novels of Margaret Oliphant*, Ph.D dissertation, University of Leicester, 1983.

³² J. S. Clarke, *Margaret Oliphant, 1828-1897: a Bibliography*. St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1986 and J. S. Clarke *Margaret Oliphant: Non-Fictional Writings*. St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1997.

³³ Margarete Rubik, *The Novels of Mrs Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes*. New York: Peter Lang, 1994, D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995.

³⁴ Rubik, *The Novels*, p.1.

³⁵ Dale Kramer, 'The Cry that Binds: Oliphant's Theory of Domestic Tragedy,' in Trela, *Margaret Oliphant*, pp. 147-165.

³⁶ W. E. Mosier, *Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*, Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Chicago, 1967, Joanne Shattock, 'Work for Women: Margaret Oliphant's Journalism,' in Bill Bell, Laurel Brake and David Finkelstein (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000, pp. 165-177 and Joanne Shattock, 'Margaret Oliphant: Journalist,' in Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris (eds.), *Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic*. Queensland: University of Queensland, 1998, pp. 95-107.

³⁷ For useful traditional feminist introductions into political theory see Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (eds.), *Women in Western Political Philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987, and S. M. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.

³⁸ For an extended discussion of the potential rectification of liberal political theory to women's advantage see, Kennedy-Mendus, 'Introduction,' in E. Kennedy and S. Mendus (eds.), *Women in Western Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-20.

³⁹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1989.p. 24. Cited by Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992, p. 21. For a good discussion of the epistemological status of

biomedical sciences, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, and Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, especially ch. 2.

⁴⁰ For clarifying the relationship between Enlightenment theories and ideas of domesticity, it is particularly useful to consult Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, especially ch. 2.

⁴¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* London: Penguin, 1992.

⁴² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 170

⁴³ The literature on Wollstonecraft is immense. See Margaret Walters, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Women: Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Martineau, Simone de Beauvoir,' in Mitchell and Oakley (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. pp. 304-378; Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1985. pp. 55-65; Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. pp. 22-27. B. G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700*, Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: D.C. Heath, 1989, pp. 112-116; Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, ch. 2.

⁴⁴ Therefore, she is praised for turning 'gender-specific references' into neutral denotations. Kennedy -Mendus (eds.), 'Introduction,' *Women in Western Political Philosophy*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Mitzi Myers, 'Reform or Ruin: A Revolution in Female Manners,' *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 1982, p. 106. Cited by Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 34.

⁴⁶ 'Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft' *Leader*, 13 October 1855. Citations from George Eliot, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, edited by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 332-338. Fawcett's re-edition of Wollstonecraft's work appeared in London in 1891.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of George Eliot's reading of *A Vindication*, see Nicholas McGuinn, 'George Eliot and Mary Wollstonecraft,' in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, London: Croom Helm, 1978, pp. 188-205. McGuinn argues that there is a discrepancy between Eliot's feminist convictions and her emphasis on the domestic aspects of Wollstonecraft's work, and he suggests that the reason for that is Eliot's own delicate social position which forces her to avoid the association with Wollstonecraft's scandalous personal life. In other words, he refuses to believe that Eliot shared at least some of the ideals of domesticity which Wollstonecraft did in fact help to create.

⁴⁸ Caine, *Victorian*, p. 26.

⁴⁹ The notable exception was, as well-known, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, yet it is also important to note that her enthusiasm for Wollstonecraft's radicalism was poured into a private letter. *Elizabeth Barrett to Miss Mitford: The Unpublished Letters*, edited by Betty Miller, London, (1954), pp.125-126. Cited by McGuinn, 'George Eliot and Mary Wollstonecraft' in Delamont-Duffin (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Woman*, p. 192. For this aspect, I am indebted to Caine, *Victorian*, p. 27.

What is more common is Sandford's stance in her *Woman and her Social and Domestic Character*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831. Sandford condemns Wollstonecraft for her sexual misconduct. ('Even when infidelity was more in vogue than it is at present, when it had almost monopolised talent, and identified itself with enlightened sentiment, the few women, who volunteered under its banner, were treated with the contempt they deserved. The female Quixote broke her lance in vindicating the "Rights of Women;" and no one sympathised in her defeat.' p. 36)

⁵⁰ Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, London: J. M. Dent, n. d. These ideas permeate the conversations between Mary and Lady Emily.

⁵¹ Oliphant, *The Literary History of England*, London: Macmillan, 1882, vol. 2, pp. 248-263

⁵² Catherine Hall, 'The Early Formation of Domestic Ideology,' in Sandra Burman (ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, London: Croom Helm, 1979, pp.15-30. Quoted from p. 24.

⁵³ The pervasive nature of evangelical ideas in Victorian intellectual life is discussed by A. O. J. Cockshut, *Truth to Life*, London: Collins, 1974. Especially pp. 64-79.

⁵⁴ Sarah Lewis, *Woman's Mission*, London: John W. Parker, 1839. p. 11.

⁵⁵ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p.20

⁵⁶ Again, there is very limited number of sources on any of the authors. Mrs John Sandford was the wife of a minister, and some information on her is available in Caine, *Victorian*, pp. 44-45. A modern discussion on Sarah Lewis is available in E. K. Helsinger, R. A. Sheets, and W. R. Veeder, *The Woman Question, 1837-1883*. 3 vols. New York: Garland, 1983. vol. 1. pp. 3-20, and notes on pp. 126-128, especially note [126] explaining that Lewis was well-known in Episcopalian circles, and refers to an article by her in *Fraser's*, 1848, 411-414. It also important to note that Marion Reid's tract *A plea for Women* was written in response to Lewis. As Helsinger mentions, George Eliot was an enthusiastic reader of *Woman's Mission*, see Helsinger vol. 1, ch.1. Sarah Stickney Ellis is the best known, longest lived and most prolific of these authors, was married to a missionary and worked on evangelical causes like the temperance movement. For Sarah Stickney Ellis, see Caine, *Victorian*, pp. 44-45, pp. 130-131.

⁵⁷ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 74.

⁵⁸ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Education of the Heart*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1869.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing in the Domestic Sphere,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 119-141. Quoted from p. 127.

⁶⁰ The most famous elaboration of female duty as domestic management is Isabella Beeton's. *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (first published 1861) London: Chancellor Press, 1994.

⁶¹ Langland, 'Women's Writing,' p. 127.

⁶² Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, London: Hutchinson, 1987, p. 106.

⁶³ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995, p. 76.

⁶⁴ Levine, *Victorian*, p. 105.

⁶⁵ E. K. Helsinger, R. A. Sheets, and W. R. Veeder, *The Woman Question, 1837-1883*. 3 vols. New York: Garland, 1983, Vol. 3. *Social issues*, p. 114.

⁶⁶ Helsinger, *The Woman Question: Social Issues*, p. 121.

⁶⁷ Hansard, 15 March 1844, cc. 1088-1100. Quoted by Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Social Issues* pp. 123-124.

⁶⁸ Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *The Wrongs of Women* (New York, 1844), pp. 132. Quoted by Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Social Issues*, p. 124.

⁶⁹ Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Social Issues*, p. 128.

⁷⁰ Nina Auerbach, *The Woman and the Demon*, Connecticut and London: Harvard UP, 1982, p. 125.

⁷¹ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 314.

⁷² Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Virago Press: London, 1988, p. 4.

⁷³ To my knowledge, there has been relatively little written on the spinster debate recently, some critics touch upon it, such as Poovey and Auerbach, but no succinct summary of it seems to exist. The best summary is provided by Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Social Issues*, pp. 134-141.

⁷⁴ Greg, W. R. 'Why are Women Redundant?' first published in April, 1862 in the *National Review*, reprinted in *Literary and Social Judgments*, London: Trubner and Co., 1869, pp. 280-316.

⁷⁵ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 453.

⁷⁶ For instance, B. R. Parkes 'Employment for Women' *The Times* Sat Nov. 1859. p. 7, on the possibility of setting up a female employment agency. Cobbe wrote about these issues on various occasions, see her contributions to *Fraser's Magazine*: Feb. 1862, pp. 228-235 and Nov. 1862, pp. 594-610. The intensity of the debate is reflected by the fact that Sophia Jex-Blake's contribution, 'Medicine as a Profession for Women' (pp. 78-120) to Josephine Butler's volume *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1869) needs to reiterate arguments about the fact that medicine is not defeminising.

⁷⁷ Francis Power Cobbe, 'What Shall we do with our Old Maids?' *Fraser's Magazine* (66), November 1862. pp. 594-610. Reprinted in Hamilton, Susan. 'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors: ' *Victorian Writing on Women by Women*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995, pp. 84-107.

⁷⁸ 'The Condition of Women' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 146.

⁷⁹ 'Social Science' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 712.

⁸⁰ 'Social Science,' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 712.

⁸¹ 'Social Science,' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 712.

⁸² Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 313.

⁸³ Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, 'The Professionalisation of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 231-250. Quoted from p. 231.

⁸⁴ Harriet Devine Jump, *Women's Writing in the Victorian Period 1837-1901: An Anthology*, Edinburgh: EUP, 1999. Introduction, xi-xviii. Reference to xi.

⁸⁵ Shattock, 'Introduction,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 1-8. Quoted from p. 2.

⁸⁶ Frances Power Cobbe, 'What shall we do with our old Maids?' p. 105.

⁸⁷ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 66.

⁸⁸ For the argument that women were active in the field of writing plays but their activity has been underdocumented see Katherine Newey, 'Women and the Theatre' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 189-208, esp. p. 195.

⁸⁹ Mellor, *Romanticism*, p. 6

⁹⁰ Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Literary Issues*, p. 28.

⁹¹ 'Modern Light Literature – Poetry,' *BM*, Feb 1856, pp. 131-2.

⁹² *The Victorian Age of English Literature*, London: Percival and Co. 1892, vol. 2, pp. 237-246. Quoted from p. 238.

⁹³ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993. pp. 41-46.

⁹⁴ Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Literary Issues*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 146

⁹⁶ Katherine Newey, 'Women and the Theatre,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 189-208. Quoted from p. 195.

⁹⁷ Nicola Diane Thompson, *Reviewing Sex: Gender and Reception of Victorian Novels*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p. 16.

⁹⁸ R.H. Hutton, 'Novels by the Authoress of John Halifax,' *North British Review*, 29 (1858) p. 474, Quoted by Helsinger et al. *The Woman Question: Literary Issues*, pp. 52-53.

⁹⁹ [Edward Bulwer-Lytton] 'On the Influence and Education of Women,' *New Monthly Magazine*, 34 (1832) 230-231. Quoted by Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Literary Issues*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, 'The Professionalisation of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 231-250.

¹⁰¹ Helsinger et al. 'Introduction' to each of the three volumes, xv

¹⁰² See section on 'Some Instances of Folly' in *A Vindication* Penguin, 1992, p. 313.

¹⁰³ Advertisement, no pagenumber

CHAPTER THREE

FICTION AND DOMESTIC EXPERIMENTS

But the fact is, that great many of the women who live very contentedly in the society of other women [...] find their audience and highest appreciation among them, and are surrounded and backed up and applauded by their own sex in a way which men would be slow to emulate.
Oliphant

It is to displace love altogether, that faithful union of Two upon which pure and progressive society is built, which is expressed not in one action but in a hundred, which means the perfect fellowship of joy and sorrow, of interests and of hopes, of mutual help, support, and consolation, which is more certainly to be obtained in marriage than in any other connection or companionship on earth.¹

That is how Oliphant wrote about domestic affairs in 1896, in her infamous review of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Grant Allen's scandalous novel *A Woman Who Did*. This much-cited article, teeming with references to the 'everlasting truth of Love,' in addition to referring to 'the faithful union of the Two' has done immense damage to her reputation and to her authority in literary and gender issues, and has conditioned the ways subsequent readers have approached her entire body of writing. The article managed to create enemies for her in two camps at least: scholars of Hardy have found it far too easy to dismiss Oliphant either for her assumed jealousy of Hardy's talent or for being the traditionalist unable to appreciate Hardy's modernism, whereas for some early feminist scholars it was easy to see the antifeminist woman – Eve's renegade – or the female archenemy of women's liberation in Oliphant.

Yet, the very citation repays some further examination. It is indeed difficult to see now what provoked an utterance of such strength. It is perhaps precisely its strength and the strength of the subsequent annoyance of critics of different critical credal positions that allow us to think that by placing such emphasis upon marriage and the sex question, Oliphant engaged with topics hotly debated in the 1890s. This, in turn, allows us to think that Oliphant's views on domestic issues need to be historically contextualised. This historical contextualisation needs to be at least twofold: not only do the normative concepts of marriage, motherhood and female authority need to be examined in their own historical terms, but the reader has to be aware that these definitions undergo changes over the nearly fifty year period of Oliphant's productivity. Nevertheless, despite the changes in her opinion during that period, marriage, motherhood and female authority constitute significant concerns for Oliphant, and a closer examination of these issues may suggest the emergence of surprisingly radical alternatives.

In order to be able to discuss Oliphant's position on the family, female roles and the changing means of domesticity, it is important to consider the changing

perception of domesticity in literary and social history. Indeed, until recently, the dominant view of Victorian women's life was not very different from Florence Nightingale's representation of it in her tract *Cassandra* in 1852,

Her "domestic duties," high-sounding words, which, for the most part, are bad habits (which she has not the courage to enfranchise herself from, the strength to break through) forbid it. What are these duties (or bad habits?)— Answering a multitude of letters which lead to nothing, from her so-called friends, keeping herself up to the level of the world that she may furnish her quota of amusement at the breakfast-table; driving out her company in the carriage. And all these things are exacted from her by her family which, if she is good and affectionate, will have more influence with her than the world.²

The image of the domestic woman, which Nightingale represents as the 'prototypical [...] feeling amongst middle class women' is a rather oppressed one: the root of the oppression, though, is not legal or institutional oppression, rather intellectual frustration, confinement and futility, and emotional isolation, the lack of companionship.³ It is a life of idleness: activities are scarce, monotonous and pointless and if they exist, they are only 'frivolous' duties.

This very powerful image of domestic existence, further discussed as intellectually stifling and morally depriving, has a left resilient legacy upon the understanding of Victorian domesticity, as is attested to by Ray Strachey's first important history of the English women's movement *The Cause* (1928) and by Virginia Woolf's early feminist tracts, which all emphasise the intellectually and emotionally oppressed life of Victorian women. The domestic as the area of confinement and of intellectual and spiritual depravation figured strongly into feminist analysis in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is apparent in books such as Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin's *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, (1978) and Kate Millett's writing.⁴ Central to some of these discourses is the Victorian image of the 'Angel in the House' which is understood to summarise the most oppressive and confining elements of Victorian patriarchy: she is the oppressed and suppressed, self-sacrificial and disempowered woman who is subjected to the meaningless rituals of domestic existence, and who lives under the circumstances of both confinement and isolation.

While Strachey's account on the confining aspects of domestic ideology was undoubtedly influential, it had certain characteristics that have been superseded since



then, although social historians started to pay attention to the domestic rather belatedly. As Davidoff and Hall point out, even traditional Marxist scholars – by definition, interested in material aspects of history – have paid ‘scant attention to the family, the private, the home, the place to which women have been conceptually relegated.’⁵ The recent interest lies in the analysis of Victorian social and domestic practices, underscored by contemporary ideas on women’s (and men’s) nature and their concomitant social roles. Social historians have shown that Strachey provided a ‘relatively fixed image of domestic women’ over the nineteenth century, and recent work has suggested that domestic womanhood was changing.⁶ Moreover, they have also pointed at the class differences between nineteenth century women’s lives (emphasising the class limitations of Nightingale’s universalising image). This sensitivity to class has called attention to what Langland calls ‘the materiality of women’s lives.’⁷

An attention paid to consumption and the sexually divided labour in the Victorian household domestic sphere by social historians has proved a particularly promising avenue in the explorations of Victorian domesticity. Davidoff and Hall’s comprehensive work on late eighteenth century and early Victorian domesticity, *Family fortunes* (1987), is particularly important here as the authors argue for the ‘centrality of the sexual division of labour within families for the development of capitalist enterprise,’⁸ and by devoting considerable attention to women’s practical as well as symbolic labour in the first decades of the nineteenth century, they challenge the image that women were as ‘the passive, dependent, and idle creatures of Victorian ideology.’⁹ Regrettably, their account stops in 1850 (precisely at the point when Oliphant started publishing) and therefore, its conclusions are of little assistance in following the changing definitions of masculinity and femininity during the second half of the nineteenth century when Oliphant was an active writer. Women’s labour in the domestic realm is also the central tenet to Elizabeth Langland’s *Nobody’s Angels* (1995). Her work analyses the literary representations of material labour as well as women’s labour in the process of accumulating Bourdieu’s ‘social capital.’ Women, in this sense, perform labour by ‘managing th[e] funds [earned by men] towards the acquisition of social and political status.’¹⁰ Monica Cohen’s work *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel* (1998) offers

a different perspective: no more feeling the need to defend the site of domesticity from accusations of idleness, Cohen proves that there is an essential similarity between domestic work and professional work, in the sense that they both are characterised by social interaction, and labour both in a professional and domestic sense.¹¹ Domestic women's and authors' labour responds to a higher calling, and it serves 'a moral higher good.'¹²

Informed by the findings of social historians, by political science and sociology, recent literary criticism has also devoted attention to the domestic sphere, and has stressed that the home is an essentially sociable venue. To some extent, this work was started by sociologically and philosophically oriented literary historians like Catherine Gallagher, who added important dimensions. Gallagher's work, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Reform and Narrative Form: 1832-1867* (1985), acknowledging the power of domestic ideology as a social thought, demonstrates the sociable nature of the domestic sphere.¹³ She argues that domestic relations are essentially cooperative relations – the domestic world is an image of social cohesion in a competitive and divisive world – and that the family 'normally designates an enclave in which the virtues of benevolence, cooperation, and selflessness take refuge and survive.' [116] In the domestic world, the governing ethics is different from the world of the public. This idea is apparent in the *Urtexts* of domestic ideology, but Gallagher's innovation consists in accepting the shaping power of the difference between the domestic and the social discourse.

Recent critical examination of intersubjective interaction from a distinctly non-psychological perspective has also proved immensely useful for the examination of individuals' domestic relationships. These works usually start from the assumption that intersubjectivity is of primary importance. Gender roles are not derivative or secondary, but natural and essential. The feminist potential of the Victorian and domestic conceptualisation of the self is a particularly important insight made by Barbara Caine's *Victorian Feminists* (1992), which argues that the very concept of women's moral superiority was put to service by Victorian women's rights reformers in order to achieve the feminisation of the public sphere. Cultural feminism, on the other hand, has done much to discuss the intersubjective aspect of domesticity, and volumes such as Tess Cosslett's *From Woman to Woman* (1988), and Pauline

Nestor's *Female Friendship and Communities: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell* (1985) offered the framework to consider female friendship as represented in fiction.¹⁴ Gender studies, from a non- woman-centered perspective, have yielded work like Victor Luftig's work *Seeing Together: Friendship between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf*, which proved to be essential in clarifying the nature of asexual friendship between men and women.¹⁵ These works have proved essential in the understanding of interpersonal interaction in the domestic sphere as they helped to map out the character and value of woman-woman or heterosexual interaction as represented in Oliphant's writing.

Considering the perspectives emerging from recent research upon the existence and nature of sexual difference, as well as women's possible roles in the domestic sphere, it is possible to relate Oliphant's ideas to the dominant discourses of mid-Victorian society on gender. It is important to recollect some ideas about Evangelical Christianity and the influence of domestic ideology as discussed in Chapter Two: the concepts of inevitable sexual difference with the appropriate division of labour and the sharp and gendered division between the world of the public and that of the private. Whether Oliphant was directly influenced by Evangelicals, or just absorbed these ideas so common during her formative years, is irrelevant now.¹⁶ Indeed, as Davidoff and Hall suggest in *Family Fortunes*, '[b]y the 1830s and 1840s, the language [of domesticity] used was increasingly secular and the belief in the natural differences and complementary roles of men and women which had originally been particularly linked to Evangelicalism, had become the common sense of the English middle class.'¹⁷

Nevertheless, these concepts played an enormous role in the formation of Oliphant's ideas of the domestic and domestic roles. She examined these issues in her early journalism in *Blackwood's Magazine* in the 1850s, when it was the current debates over women's rights legislation, such as Divorce and Married Women's Property legislation and over women's literature that made it necessary for Oliphant to define her position on the nature of the domestic, on marriage and on gendered sex roles. Oliphant's general vision of social organisation was deeply rooted in the moral superiority of the domestic arena and in the ideal of the home, and these views consistently influence her view upon women's position. In a number of her early

articles for *Blackwood's Magazine*, the domestic is contrasted with the outside world, is a refuge from it, a place 'to retire to.'¹⁸ Moreover, it is also an agent of personal moral amelioration, as, by accommodating the family circle, it exercises its humanising, 'softening and civilising influences.'¹⁹ The link between domesticity and morality is reinforced by comparisons with Continental structures: Oliphant represents domesticity as a particularly British institution, regrettably absent in France – an idea which provokes such conclusions as, '[t]he Parisians are not given to domesticity, nor are they a virtuous people.'²⁰ Domesticity, therefore, is a guarantee of personal morality, the personal morality of the most vulnerable of society: '[f]or want of it, the man wanders off to the public house with its cheerful lights and fire – for want of it, the women-daughters, in hideous independence, go away at sixteen to take lodgings and live by themselves.'²¹ Occasionally, Oliphant argues that it even acts as the cornerstone of social peace and consensus: 'the principle of that fair, cheerful and kindly home' is often 'the chief preventive of the waste and ruin of her [Britain's] working classes.'²² What is important to note about the domestic venue at this time is that it is not specifically designed to contain women. Rather, through its civilising influences, it protects the most vulnerable of both sexes from immorality. In short, domestic existence is seen to be the source of private and personal morality, or even, potentially, of public morality.

The conviction about the softening and civilising influence of the domestic venue and circle is only one of Oliphant's fundamental ideas that determine women's (and sometimes men's) ideal position. There are another two – equally important – ideas influencing Oliphant's treatment of domesticity: one is a fundamental belief that sociability and interconnectedness are the primary condition of humanity; the other is a complex view of human nature, characterised by the simultaneous similarity and difference between groups of humanity, including the similarity and difference between men and women.²³ Oliphant was fully convinced that men and women, 'in all the great fundamental principles of their mind and nature [. . .] are one.'²⁴ The primary sameness, the God-given identity, consists in the fundamental Protestant conviction of the same moral worth of men and women. Furthermore, there is the further question of mental equality, the shared rationality of the sexes. As early as 1856, Oliphant self-assuredly declares: 'Let us not enter upon the tender

question of mental inferiority. Every individual woman... is perfectly easy on her own account that she is at least not remarkably behind her masculine companions.²⁵ This view reaches its extreme in 1866, when she argues not only women's mental equality but superiority.²⁶ It is the belief in an essentially Enlightenment idea of an innate and inviolable female rationality that fuels Oliphant's indignation against the ingenues, as embodied by Thackeray's Amelia in *Vanity Fair* (1847) who is 'a greater libel upon womankind than Becky herself' and other 'tender pretty fools' who have failed to develop into rational creatures.²⁷ The belief in male and female sameness is complemented by a strong sense of sexual difference. This difference is secondary, yet it is nonetheless important.²⁸ The 'distinctive character as women' is defined as biological difference.²⁹ Therefore, women have biologically 'different constitutions, different organisations,' causing a psychological difference and different identity between men and women.³⁰ The different identity enables women to fulfil 'their different vocations, and different offices.'³¹

The moral superiority of the domestic environment and the human need for sociability make it obvious, therefore, that the ideal venue of human existence is the domestic environment, and it is even more so for women, who can there find an outlet for their nurturing instincts. The naturalness and affinity between women (or, as was not uncommon in the nineteenth century: woman or *Woman*) and female domestic roles is never a question for Oliphant. The joys of women's lives are described in specifically female terms, all related to the domestic sphere and specifically linked to female subject positions: 'the woman's special happinesses – the exuberant girl-delights – the maiden meditation, fancy-free – the glory of motherhood – the blessings as entirely her own as are her griefs.'³² Yet there are two important factors that make Oliphant's position stand out as not only a domestic one but also a domestic feminist one. Firstly, her belief that the domestic sphere and domestic duty, what she calls 'the regulation of the Christian household' are in no way inferior to public office.³³ Secondly, Oliphant was fully convinced that female domestic roles are not only natural but authoritative: that women naturally do have an authority over domestic affairs, the value of which is not inferior to masculine, public duties. She consistently adhered to this view throughout her life. What remains to be examined, is the question of structures: the types of domestic

arrangements, or the types of (domestic) social spaces that enable the best performance of a woman's duty. An engagement with these issues remained one of Oliphant's most important concerns during her entire life as she systematically explored the kinds of social structures guaranteeing female fulfilment and authority.

'The kingdom was wisely governed:' Early representations of domestic authority

No wonder that first Oliphant turned to the examination of the conjugal family as a site for exercising female domestic authority. The 'affective nuclear family' which gradually became the dominant form of family in Britain after the beginning of the eighteenth century, and which was based on domestic affections rather than other types of kinship, had a unique potential for fulfilling the role of guaranteeing female domestic authority.³⁴ In fact, the very concept of the affective nuclear family was primarily based on the nature and skills of the domestic woman. Oliphant's exploration suggests an unconditional belief: the nuclear family is capable of guaranteeing female domestic authority. The domestic woman, according to Oliphant, exercises her power in two specific capacities: in the relatively autonomous capacities of the mother and of the mistress of the house.

The ideas that women's authority is primarily domestic and that the best place for exercising it is the conjugal family are explored in Oliphant's early articles on the woman question. These articles were published in *Blackwood's Magazine*: 'The Laws Concerning Women' in 1856 and 'The Condition of Women' in 1858. The domestic vision in these articles is underscored by Oliphant's concept of marriage, which she refuses 'to conceptualise [...] simply in sexual terms.'³⁵ For Oliphant, it is not 'the union of souls and sympathies of which lovers dream.'³⁶ Rather, it is a relationship based on reason and consideration: it is for 'people who have soberly taken up the common lot, and are soberly living the ordinary life.'³⁷ In other words, Oliphant envisions marriage as a pragmatic institution, it is both 'an alliance offensive and defensive against all the world' and it is responsible for raising the children.³⁸ This pragmatic institution, in turn, provides separate spheres of existence and sets of duties to men and women, indeed, it speaks what Davidoff and

Hall call 'the language of reciprocal duties.'³⁹ The domestic woman, in this clearly cut system of social arrangements, is responsible for raising the children and is also endowed with the authority of the housekeeper.

Despite the obvious expectation that Oliphant would be committed to the exploration of the domestic woman's maternal authority in her early articles, neither woman's role as the moral guardian of the household or as the single custodian of children gains hearing. Rather, female authority and role are defined as a general managerial authority: women's task is 'to regulate the Christian household,' – principally, to regulate domestic finances, in the capacity of the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer.'⁴⁰ 'Rule the House' is her right and duty.⁴¹

The unimpaired domestic authority of the married woman is perhaps best represented in Oliphant's early fiction, in a reasonably successful novel, *The Athelings* (written in 1856-57), which represents the pulling together of Oliphant's ideas about the proper relations between men and women, about the proper operation of the lower middle-class, Christian family, and the proper performance of a specific set of woman's duty: the domestic mother.⁴² The novel is usually cited for its uniquely autobiographical representation of the female author, and I shall return to this in Chapter Four, when discussing female authorship.⁴³ Yet, significantly, the novel is not called 'Agnes' or 'Miss Atheling,' in the way her subsequent novels are usually named after their central young female character (*Agnes*, *Hester*, *Phoebe Junior*, *Hester*, *Kirsteen*) whose choice of domestic, social or professional career is in their focus, and in which the domestic serves as the social or familial context for these choices. *The Athelings* is about the context itself. The novel presents different public and private careers of the young heroes and heroines: the choice of law for Charlie the son of the family, that of marriage to the most suitable suitor for the beautiful Marian, and the choice of professional authorship for Agnes. These choices grow naturally out of their domestic environment. Implicit behind these career choices is the 'professional domesticity' of Mrs Atheling.⁴⁴

Indeed, *The Athelings* is almost a textbook example for the early Victorian family, where family life – represented as a little organic community – is organised 'around the idea of sexual difference, expressed through the proper forms of manliness and femininity.'⁴⁵ The home is consistently represented as the venue of

sociable labour, organisation, neatness and tidiness, and the household defined by Mr Atheling's predictable, clerkish working patterns. The parents' middle age facilitates the representation of marriage as a rational institution, aimed at performing a specific set of reciprocal duties. Mr Atheling, a clerk, member of the salaried classes, in a merchant's office on two hundred pounds a year, embodies the virtues of the early Victorian domestic male, whose masculinity is legitimised by his domestic nature, and by his ability to secure the needs of his dependants. Mrs Atheling's life is defined by the intersubjective events such as family occurrences. She constructs her own history out of family events: 'her recollections chiefly turned upon the times "when we lived in — Street," — "when we took that new house in the terrace."' [vol.1. p.147] Mrs Atheling's role as the benevolent matriarch is characterised by incessant labour, in both of the major arenas of female domestic authority: she is the impeccable housekeeper and the mother for her large family, indeed, she is 'responsible for creating and maintaining the house, its contents and its human constituents.'⁴⁶ In this sense, Mrs Atheling, performing essential services to the other members of the little community, oversees the domestic rituals of housekeeping such as food, home embellishment, care of children. She is in charge both of the physical welfare of her family and indeed, she is almost exclusively represented in her parlour, mending or making clothes for her younger children. But, more importantly, she is the household 'chancellor of the exchequer,' who consults the standing committee of the family over the finances, yet, has the authority to dismiss 'the committee en permanence.' On the whole, 'the domestic kingdom was wisely governed.' [vol.1. p.16]

Her labour as a middle class domestic manager, the provider of services, is intertwined with deeply felt class and financial considerations. She is in control of the 'cultural' or 'class capital' of her family. Her careful management of what Langland calls the 'semiotics of middle-class life' includes the labour of controlling the display of the 'social signifier,' which differentiates her family from both the higher and the lower classes.⁴⁷ Her class position, based in 'Islington, a mercantile and clerkish suburb' [vol.1. p.4], is a characteristically lower middle-class position, with one servant. Her intense sensitivity to the aspirations of gentility are manifest in the internal household arrangements, and, as Oliphant ironically comments, she 'had

ambition, and aimed at gentility; so of course, they had a piano.' [vol.1. p.62]. On the other hand, the limitations of her class position are exposed when upper class visitors, attracted by the combined power of Agnes's published authorship of novels and Marian's innocent beauty, arrive at the house. The visit by Mrs Edgerley, the recognised society belle and authoress of sweet books, causes distinct embarrassment as she enters the family parlour, which, unlike more elegant drawing rooms, is not only a place for visits, but also for feminine, though genteel, work. The very fact that Agnes and Marian, who had already gained an insight into the life of the aristocracy, feel the need to translate between Mrs Edgerley and the their mother's universe, immediately qualifies their universe as the lower middle class suburbia, which they nevertheless regard as their natural home, even after experiencing the comforts and elegance of the 'luxurious apartments of the Willows.' [vol.2. p.80] The position of the Athelings is the one at which Sarah Stickney Elllis's prescriptive books on household management were targeted.

Mrs Atheling's maternal role similarly links her maternal responsibilities to her class position, and the authoritative character of her position is guaranteed by Mr Atheling's deliberate non-involvement. Her role is no more the early nineteenth-century supervisory role of the proper religious practices of her family, or the inculcation of Christian morality in doctrinal terms. Rather, the bulk of her maternal role consists in guiding her adolescent daughters amongst the perils of friends and suitors. A different universe intrudes upon the world of cosy domesticity by the dual device of Agnes's social rise as authoress as well as by the fairy-tale plot device of the unexpected, though minor and legally contested, inheritance of a small country residence. Indeed, guiding daughters on the paths of the semiotics of middle class life is the main task for Mrs Atheling, and the appropriateness of their relationships, both with female friends and suitors, in turn, is gauged by class-driven morality. Mrs Atheling herself is very conscious of this task. The appearance of Mrs Edgerley is regarded with ambivalence as Mrs Atheling suspects that in her house and circles 'there may be some who are not fit companions' for her girls. [vol.1. p.260] While the threat implied by Mrs Edgerley's company is purely potential, the threat represented by Rachel is more realistic. Rachel herself may have morally destructive influence. She is an orphaned singer kept in the aristocratic household, and it is her

equivocal position which disqualifies her from immediate friendships with the girls, as their mother warns them: 'My dear, I might be very sorry for her, but it would not be proper for me to forget you in my sympathy for her,' knowing very well that her daughters' own sense of Right and Wrong as well as their public reputation may suffer from the orphan's equivocal position. [vol.2. p.84]. Unsuitable suitors are also threatening. The first suitor, the aristocratic guardsman Sir Langham, whose attentions are undoubtedly complementary to Marian who is 'fluttered [sic!] no less by the magnificent and marvellous idea of being a ladyship' is successfully kept at bay by his own reluctance on seeing the class divide between himself and the Athelings. [vol. 2. p.57] But the emphasis on the class divide is not only in his mind, but it is carefully, though probably unconsciously, shown to him by Mrs Atheling. The second suitor, Louis, causes moral anxiety to Mrs Atheling not only because of illegitimacy, but because he also lacks in skills that would enable him to 'secure the needs of his dependants.'⁴⁸ His manhood is questionable. Although Mrs Atheling becomes converted to accepting Louis's marriage to Marian, nevertheless, she is still uncertain about their future, which then is resolved by an improbable plot device as Louis turns out to be lost heir to a lordship and estate.

The role of the orphaned singer Rachel is particularly interesting in the story, for the difference between her motherless status and that of the carefully mothered Misses Athelings lays bare the advantages of maternal upbringing, and also clarifies the nature of maternal labour and authority. Girls in proper families learn literacy and respectability. The three girls share the fundamental contention that mothers equal home: 'We never had any mother,' said Rachel, sadly; 'we have never had any home; we do not know, what it is.' [vol.2. p.36] The absence of the mother for Rachel makes her inferior to Agnes and Marian. Rachel's literacy is limited in contrast with Agnes's and Marian's, and it is obvious that the limited yet serviceable education that they have (evidenced by Agnes's ability to write two published novels in the course of the plot) was received in the family home. Moreover, Rachel 'had no traditions of respectability to deter her from anything she could do,' [vol.3. p.120] and the lack of maternal education prevents her from seeing the dangers of the 'sexualised self exposure' that public singing means.⁴⁹ Indeed, Rachel's lack of the sense of middle class propriety reaches such a degree that she would even consider

singing on the stage, and therefore, circulating her voice, person, and body in public. She thinks 'it would make very little difference [...] whether her performance was in a public concert room or a private assembly.' [vol.3. p.120] To this Mrs Atheling replies, 'Not wrong – but not at all respectable ... and unfeminine, and very dangerous indeed, and a discreditable position for a young girl. ' [vol.3. p.121] Eventually, she escapes this future, but this is precisely due to the quasi-maternal care for her by the two sisters, as well as to the improbabilities of the plotline (she turns out to be a lost countess) that she avoids the fate of the 'public woman,' singing for her living – a future which Mrs Atheling would dread. The lack of maternal guidance – be it in on the paths of literacy or propriety – exposes Rachel to ill reputation and therefore to social vulnerability.

The Athelings summarises the main themes and convictions of Oliphant's early oeuvre about the character of the home, the right or wrong realisation of gendered sex roles in the early Victorian family, and the nature of maternal authority. In the laborious and sociable venue of the home, the family as a community is described in terms of cohesion rather than conflict, and the action of the plot derives from the intrusion of external characters or *deus ex machina* events. There are no faultlines in this idyllic representation of the selfless yet authoritative and industrious mother and the obedient children. In this story, the apparently uneventful life of the domestic mother gains hearing. She is the key to the domestic idyll as well as its happy centre.

The spinster and her family: Earlier experiments with alternative domesticity

Oliphant defined marriage as a pragmatic institution rather than a romantic one: people 'soberly' take up the common lot is when they get married. But, if marriage and the conjugal family are only pragmatic institutions for enabling natural female roles and for establishing female domestic authority, it is worth exploring whether there are any other alternative social organisations that are equally suitable sites for exercising domestic authority and that can represent a true community. Indeed, already in 1856, Oliphant points out that the '[t]he law compels no one' to enter into marriage and encourages women to remain spinsters if their sense of duty is not

sufficient: in other words, she creates a distance between female domestic roles and the institution within which they are commonly practised.⁵⁰ In some early texts Oliphant makes tentative explorations into alternative structures where female domestic authority can flourish.

By writing about spinsterhood, Oliphant joined one of the most important cultural debates of the mid-nineteenth century.⁵¹ The parameters of the superfluous woman debate have been discussed in Chapter Two, suffice it to say now, that the chief conflict between W. R. Greg and women's voices crystallised around women's work: for Greg, women's employment was unthinkable, while feminist voices in the debate argued for increased employment opportunities. As far as women's work was concerned, Oliphant, who believed strongly in sexual autonomy and therefore rejected Greg's solution of shipping women to the colonies in proportion to men, hesitantly agreed with the feminist voices by suggesting the solution of working communities as a way of adjusting the world of work to women's needs.

Yet Oliphant's participation in the superabundant woman debate also focused on another important perspective. She discussed the plight of spinsters in three different articles published in *Blackwood's Magazine*: 'The Condition of Women' in 1858, 'Scottish National Character' and 'Social Science' in 1860. In these three statements on the issue, there is very little emphasis on the existence of a 'spinsters' plight,' so recurrent in other publications. The reason for the absence is not that Oliphant does not acknowledge that spinsters' *economic* support needs a solution. The reason why Oliphant is careful to avoid any emphasis on plight is because she knows very well that even the best-intentioned champions of women's cause can easily expose women to ridicule and to the questioning of female integrity and autonomy. Instead, Oliphant is keen to foreground the similarities of spinsters' situation to everyone else's. By emphasising the long history of spinsterhood – by claiming that there were 'unmarried women long ago, before civilisation had made such fatal progress' – she normalises the social status of the spinster, and she defuses the potential of the spinster issue to offer itself to misogynistic interpretations.⁵² By foregrounding the self-sufficiency and respectability of previous prominent women and spinsters, such as authors Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth and Miss Ferrier, and the whole class of Scottish spinsters, Oliphant emphasises that women can be self-

sufficient and respectable by themselves. In other words, Oliphant emphasises that the spinster is an autonomous human being in her own right, irrespective of marital status and the presence of a male. Spinsterhood, indeed, is 'worthy and indeed morally beneficial alternative' to traditionally understood domestic life.⁵³

Yet these defences of the spinster – that she is not a sexual anomaly and a deficient being, in other words, that spinsterhood is perfectly normal – still do not answer the most important problem for Oliphant: how the celibate spinster should fulfil ethical imperatives of interconnectedness, and how to prove that the spinster is not 'lonely and comfortless,' and, furthermore, that the spinster can satisfy the need to nurture.⁵⁴ But, based on the idea that motherhood is not only a question of biological motherhood, spinsters can enter the common ties of humanity, she suggested: they can enter into social usefulness by following the example of Miriam, or, alternatively, they can devote themselves to the service of the Lord.⁵⁵

When attempting to trace Oliphant's ideas on different issues, one of the recurrent difficulties is to separate out the ideas informing novels versus articles. As a general rule, it is possible to say that her essays, mostly in *Blackwood's*, usually participate in the ongoing debates with more intensity, and explore economic implications more intensively than her novels – especially the three-decker ones. This is certainly true for themes like the representation of spinsters. At this stage of her career, Oliphant's fiction never emphasises the difficulties of economic survival – this condition is fulfilled by the representation of spinsters as women of independent means. Issues related to the value of the unmarried woman, and the modes of her entry into the common ties of humanity, however, are explored. A consideration of two of her early novels, exploring 'the social and emotional world of the single woman of independent means' shall be enough to illustrate the idea that the unmarried woman has equal powers and opportunities to exercise social usefulness.⁵⁶

Spinsterhood, indeed, was one of Oliphant's recurrent concerns in fiction. As the *Autobiography* attests, one of her earliest works, a piece of her juvenilia, chose a spinster for its principal heroine. Her *Autobiography* describes the piece as follows:

I wrote a little book in which the chief character was an angelic elder sister, unmarried, who had the charge of a family of motherless brothers and sisters, and who had a shrine of sorrow in her life in the shape of the

portrait and memory of her lover who had died young. It was all very innocent and guileless. [25]⁵⁷

If we can believe the autobiographer, Oliphant already in this early novel valorises spinsterhood rather than representing it as unnatural: she represents it as a satisfactory – or at least by no means anomalous – state of affairs.

The question of how the unmarried female can enter into the common ties of humanity, proving that she is not ‘lonely and comfortless’ outside wedlock, is an important theme in at least two of Oliphant’s early novels: *Miss Margaret Maitland* (1849) and *Orphans* (1858).⁵⁸ She selected the former one for her literary debut and perhaps this fact further emphasises her interest in spinsterhood. The two stories, taken together, demonstrate Oliphant’s deep-seated belief: spinsters’ lives are just as characterised by emotional and personal productivity as women living in traditional family formations.

The story of *Miss Margaret Maitland* is firmly rooted in the tradition of Scottish fiction. Its full title – *Passages from the Life of Mistress Margaret Maitland* – harks back to Lockhart’s novel *Some Passages in the life of Adam Blair* (1822), but its most important connection is perhaps to Susan Ferrier’s *Marriage* (1818).⁵⁹ Both *Marriage* and *Maitland* share the same post-Enlightenment concerns about the right (moralistic and puritan) or wrong (frivolous) upbringing of adolescent girls. *Marriage* charts the moral development of two pre-Victorian adolescents. Mary Douglas receives the casebook Evangelical upbringing, with an emphasis on spirituality and puritanism, which successfully guides her into a marriage which is both emotionally and socio-economically suitable. Her twin sister Adelaide’s frivolous upbringing, on the other hand, predestines her to the foolish choices of adultery and elopement. Oliphant’s tale similarly compares the advantages of the moral upbringing that Miss Margaret provides to her ward Grace Maitland with the detrimental effects of the frivolous and irresponsible upbringing the daughters of the parallel family receive from their haughty and greedy mother. Here, just as in Ferrier’s novel, a puritan and God-fearing upbringing produces a girl who successfully resolves the conflict between sense and the heart’s sensibility, while haughty and frivolous influences in the other family result in subsequent foolish choices and unhappiness for the other young woman.

The similarity between the two novels ends here. Ferrier's didactic domestic tale, in Oliphant's hands, becomes a domestic tale narrated by the middle aged spinster Miss Margaret Maitland, and it is precisely this shift from a didactic tale of youthful love affairs and education to the self-reflection of an ageing woman that makes the story relevant here. The very unconventionality of foregrounding an ageing spinster gained the appreciation of the anonymous reviewer of the *Athenaeum*.

Had the passages been condensed within a single volume, the tale would have taken a very high rank. Its imaginary writer is, of her single self, sufficient to sweeten the tempers of all who have maintained a traditional antipathy to the genus Spinster.[...] There are Mistress Maitlands in real life, but we are not aware that the Maiden Aunt has ever before found so favourable a representative in print.⁶⁰

Miss Margaret Maitland, the proud spinster, a 'quiet woman of discreet years and small riches' leads a remote and isolated life. [vol. 1. p. 53] The return of her childhood friend, the married and widowed Susan Graeme allows her to compare the fortunes of the married woman and the spinster.

I minded of her first, as she was in her youth, dwelling with her mother in the old house of Lochlee, and how I thought there was not the like of her in the world. She was, maybe, five or six years older than me, a time which looked long in our young days, but made little odds when we were both well on in years; and then I minded of her marrying wild Malcolm Elphinstone of Lilliesleaf, and being but a distressed-like wife, for he was a gay man and not to be trusted, and it was said in the countryside that the old lady, Mrs Graeme, was sorely against the marriage. [vol. 1. p.192]

Spinsterhood, therefore, offers physical advantages over marriage: the spinster is not more withered, but rather healthier than her married and widowed counterpart. As Miss Margaret observes of Susan,

She was lying upon a sofa, a thin, wasted, woman, with the hair upon her fore-head as white as the driven snow. I knew I myself was beginning to be bowed with the years, but I thought not to find her burdened so, and I stood there at the door, looking upon her, like one that had lost the use of speech. [vol.1. p. 194]

Celibacy is no cause for physical affliction. Yet self-preservation alone is a very doubtful benefit in the face of the Victorian concepts of work and duty, or the totemic notion of motherhood. It is Miss Margaret's involvement in the lives of others – blood relations and adopted family members – that provides her with social usefulness, and indeed, with what Langland calls 'social productivity.'⁶¹ Potential

motherhood (as opposed to biological one) allows Miss Margaret to feel that her life is not wasted, that she is not 'friendless.' Surrogate motherhood does surprise her, but it also fills her with satisfaction:

Truly it was a strange thing, that on me, a single woman, there should come more charge of bairns than many mother of a family is trusted with; for besides Grace, that had no friend of her own to counsel her, there were the concerns of the bairn Mary coming, like a ravelled thread, through my hands. [vol. 2. pp. 96-97]

Spinsterhood, as shown in the novel, is no physical evil or dehumanising psychological affliction. However, the final verdict on whether spinsterhood is a deliberate choice for those who do not have the sufficient sense of duty remains unstated by Miss Margaret's tale. Some aspects of the plot suggest the primacy of marriage: the major thrust of the plot is finding the suitable partners for the four eligible young people, and, as it transpires, Miss Margaret's spinsterhood is the result of a youthful disappointment, rather than her own choice of celibacy. Compensatory though it may appear, nevertheless, spinsterhood is no affliction or depravation as the final turn of the plot shows. Reuben Reid, the well-meaning but rather uninspiring, and in no way socially acceptable, schoolmaster proposes to Miss Margaret Maitland, and he intends this act to rubberstamp his social ascent. His proposal simply reflects the commonly held wisdom: that an unmarried woman, no matter how well-born she is, is socially inferior to her married contemporary.

But matrimony is an honourable estate, Miss Marget [...] in especial with a licentiate – I am meaning with a placed minister of the Kirk. The leddy of a minister may haud up her head with any leddy in the land, and you ken it is far otherwise with a single woman, living her lee-lane in the world [vol.3. p. 276]

Yet 'Miss Marget' weighs the advantages of such social elevation against the loss of her personal freedom and she finds that, in the first instance, the social elevation offered by Reuben Reid is simply illusory, and, that the preservation of her freedom outweighs the otherwise very doubtful advantage. Therefore, she votes for not moving 'into a strange man's house' [vol. 3. p. 279] but for lifelong spinsterhood. Here, Oliphant demonstrates her belief in female integrity and domestic usefulness, and in the possibility and viability of surrogate domesticity.

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on one of Oliphant's excellent shorter novels, *Orphans* (1858) which is also concerned with the ways in which a spinster can lead a sociable existence, and with the ways spinster's lives are actively

filled with 'offices of tenderness,' inseparable from emotional and personal productivity.⁶² Clare Nugent, the heroine of *Orphans*, is a twenty-eight year old wealthy single woman, sharing many characteristics with the older Miss Margaret. Indeed, the life of Oliphant's spinsters is just as organised around the idea of sexual difference and the proper performance of a specific set of women's duty as that of Mrs Atheling, except that the tangible income – the essential prerequisite of middle class life – is provided by Mr Atheling in the conjugal version, while in the spinster-stories, the domestic life of the heroines is secured by family inheritance providing them with financial competence. The financial requisites of household management thus guaranteed, Oliphant examines the satisfactory nature of spinsterhood: the single woman is not lonely, not comfortless, and is certainly socially productive in managing households and their human constituents. Just like Miss Margaret, Clare is committed to the moral superiority of domestic existence in contrast with the dreary world outside. She is also committed to a specific set of 'woman's duty,' and she is determined to perform it. [28]

The plot of the novel is the systematic exploration of all the options and structures available to allow the fulfilment of this particular kind of duty. First, Clare considers the option of marriage, which would indeed provide the most obvious avenue to performing a woman's duty. Yet for the female author, the concept of sexual autonomy is at least as strong as the call of domesticity, and therefore, Clare rejects the idea of marriage without love. Her singleness is in no way a personal deficiency in her eyes, for she rejects the idea that an unmarried woman can be of no use. As she explains,

I was not disposed to think, being very unlikely to form any new ties on my own part, that it was quite impossible for a woman, unmarried or childless, to do a woman's duty in the world. [28]

Domestic duty and life in the 'affections' not only guarantee the possibility of social usefulness; they also guarantee, in accordance with Oliphant's profoundly social view of life, the liberation from selfishness. It is for this reason – for the lack of human fellowship – that Clare's singlehood is problematic. This fact is also underscored by the emphasis upon how bachelors – 'single useless persons' – in the text suffer from the dreariness of solitary existence. [65]

Considering Clare's commitment to both woman's duty and sexual autonomy, the possibility of acting as a female philanthropical agent also arises. Putting a woman's talents to public use in real life was an experiment performed by Florence Nightingale just before the writing of the story.⁶³ Yet Clare Nugent is determined in her rejection of a career after Nightingale's fashion. This rejection is partly rooted in her deferential acceptance of the voice of her deceased father:

my father himself, and others who, perhaps, had equal influence upon me in my youth, had impressed upon me a great terror of "stepping out of my own sphere" or leaving the natural retirement of an English gentlewoman even for the holiest work of charity. [69-70]

It is also rooted in the idea that Clare associates Miss Nightingale with the impersonal charity and selfishness of the Orphan Institutes, all driven by what she sees as external motives for charity rather than heartfelt and internalised ones. Lastly, to occupy her affections, she experiments with gathering her relatives to a family receptacle on her estate and thereby attempts to create a human(e) community. The project of creating a surrogate family of elderly relatives, however, fails, largely because of the irremediable selfishness of elderly relatives, the 'solitary and self-regarding individuals.' [212] Her second experiment concerns her adoption of four orphaned girls – a project fundamentally different from pretentious and insensitive institutionalised charity. This is the project which eventually succeeds. The success of this experiment proves the point about the viability of alternative communities, as well as about the assumption that by creating alternative communities, spinsters can be capable of fulfilling intersubjective imperatives, and lead sociable and useful lives.

Redefining Domesticity: marital failure and expanded domesticities

With all respect for the eloquent advocates of work for women, a capable woman is just as likely to make a livelihood for herself if she wants it, and get a good return for her pains, as a man is. If she chooses to attend her own business and go quietly on her own way, she may go all over Europe with as perfect safety from insult or impertinence as any man; and in domestic life, nobody who keeps his eyes about him can assert that she has not her full weight and influence. All these are private privileges of individual existence, and they are those which act most strongly upon life. ⁶⁴

That is how Oliphant summarised the nature of female domestic existence and domestic authority in her article 'The Great Unrepresented' in 1866. The article, which has become famous for its outspoken rejection of suffrage for female householders proposed by Mill, gives the most succinct summary of an essentially assertive and proud view of female domestic existence. In it she argues that female domestic roles are not only natural, but also that a woman possesses unimpaired domestic authority in her nuclear family, and it is only the 'hot-headed young women' who would deny that the domestic is an inferior way of female life. [371] Yet, this powerful statement about the nuclear family guaranteeing female domestic authority is the last of its kind in her work. From about 1867, her emphasis gradually shifts in the opposite direction. Partly, Oliphant's investigation addresses the question of why the traditional family is unable to guarantee female domestic authority and fulfilment, and partly, she expands the very definition of the domestic and examines alternative domestic combinations and arrangements.

Although Oliphant's increasing interest in alternative domestic structures becomes apparent in the 1870s, it would be difficult to find one single impetus behind the shift of her opinion. Biographical events certainly contributed to Oliphant's changing definition of the family. She became a widow in 1859, with two young children and a baby, and her public success as a novelist certainly coincided with her young widowhood, when she had the sole charge of her family. In 1870, however, the number of her retainees dramatically increased as she 'inherited' not only her impoverished and arguably clinically depressive brother Frank Wilson, 'my poor brother' but also she became the sole keeper of three of his four children, in addition to her own.⁶⁵ The sense of duty which caused her to believe that she was in fact responsible for these people was perhaps also rooted in her Scottish interpretation of the family, with more emphasis upon the co-residence of more than two generations than in its English counterpart.⁶⁶ Yet, in addition to these familial factors, it is also important to point out that the media for expressing her views also changed around 1870: her journalistic output expanded to such an extent that it included new genres and perspectives. This allowed her explore domestic structures not in the form of political or social manifestos explicitly discussing current social issues, as it is exemplified by 'The Great Unrepresented,' but indirectly: through the

analysis of biographies of prominent people, which became one of the dominant genres of her series, and the detailed examination of which is the subject of Chapters Four and Five.

In order to analyse the superiority of alternative domestic structures, it is necessary to analyse why Oliphant considered marriage increasingly less the site of female fulfilment. She subjected conjugal relations to profound examination in the 1870s, and her views expressed in essays and reflected by a number of plotlines display recurrent patterns: wifehood is not represented as a status endowed with a high degree of desirability. In some instances, wifehood is associated with personal frustration. In others, especially in the plotline of some novels, the emphasis is on the ways male improvidence curtails female domestic authority. Oliphant increasingly emphasises the general cultural devaluation of female domestic labour, and of female achievement in general. These observations on the fundamental shortcomings of conjugal relations demonstrate a dissatisfaction with conjugality. This dissatisfaction led her to experiment with versions of alternative and subversive domestic arrangements.

Emotional dissatisfaction and the lack of companionship are the most important characteristics of Oliphant's representation of wifehood in the 1870s, yet its roots go back to earlier representations of conjugality. These earlier representations of conjugality already suggest faultlines in her commitment to women's authority and possibilities of fulfilment in the nuclear family. This is not particularly apparent in the articles discussing current social issues. They suggest that her ideal of conjugality and the current practice of it in her society overlap. Yet, already during the 1850s, essays not explicitly discussing current legislation make slightly different references to the nature of the man-woman relationship or dominant 'heterosexual relations.'⁶⁷ The rational, sympathetic woman (wife) is a central character in Oliphant's early representations of wifehood in articles discussing literary or biographical representations of women, yet she is more often driven by duty than by affections. The 'rational wife' may be capable of devotion but cannot love unconditionally, only in her own terms. Oliphant's definition of wifehood distinctly shifts towards emotional frustration and dissatisfaction – so prominent that conjugal relations even become the metaphor applied to the relations between

Scotland and England. As she says in 1861, '[t]he poor old country bears a certain conjugal relationship to her richer neighbour' and it is obvious that the relationship is that of dependence.⁶⁸ Dissatisfaction and aversion characterises Mrs Delaney's relationship to her husband, as it is described in Oliphant's essay 'Two Ladies' published in 1862 in *Blackwood's*: she was bullied at an early age into an arranged marriage with a repulsive man to whom she feels 'an invincible aversion.'⁶⁹ Mrs Thrale, in the same article, does not get married with 'shuddering horror' as the previous lady, rather, 'with a mortified resentment.'⁷⁰ Yet distance or outright aversion do not lead to any sort of domestic rebellion – a fact that male authors like Charles Reade tend to attribute to unfailing affections, but which for Oliphant is more likely to derive from female integrity.⁷¹ Dissatisfaction and frustration lead Oliphant's married heroines to legitimate displacements by finding emotional outlets in 'transferring affections' to other people and causes. Female friends are the objects of 'passionate regard' for Mrs Delaney, and the same female friends reciprocate her emotions with passionate and tender love.⁷² Affairs of the state provide the necessary emotional outlet for Mary Queen of Scots, who is disappointed in and revolted by her foolish husband Darnley. Darnley childishy importunes her for the matrimonial crown, and revolts her by 'his evil habits, drinking, and violence.'⁷³ Children become the objects of affection for the disappointed Lady Mary Wortley Montague.⁷⁴ This silent revolution attests to Oliphant's growing dissatisfaction with the ideal of marriage, and the wide range of supporting examples suggests that it is a structural problem rather than one of personal incompatibility. Nevertheless, conciliatory solutions are sought within the conjugal structure.

Emotional dissatisfaction remains one of Oliphant's most recurrent motives, yet from the 1870s onwards, another critique of domestic masculinity complements it, as male improvidence comes to occupy center-stage in her work. While the value of female domestic labour is in no way inferior to work in the public domain, female domestic authority, as Oliphant is aware, is fully dependent upon male financial contribution. References to male improvidence are particularly common in articles discussing female authorship.

Her growing resentment of male improvidence is particularly blatant in her later review of Mary Mitford's career in her article 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford'

in *Blackwood's* in 1870, particularly in comparison with her earlier treatment of Mitford's life in the same magazine in 1854. The comparison is all the more appropriate considering that Mitford was the only female author whose life she discussed twice in detail. In her very first review for *Blackwood's* in 1854, Oliphant already hints at Mary Mitford's father's improvidence, which was the ultimate impulse for her to turn to the more lucrative genre of fiction. Yet his thriftless provision at first appears to inflict no burden on his female relatives: it is partly excused by his Irish nature (therefore, natural and inevitable); and partly by Mary Mitford's acceptance of this unwanted and deeply unfitting responsibility in good faith. Oliphant's review of the same incident in 1870 highlights the male arrogance which demands female sacrifice. Mary Mitford still dutifully and willingly accepts the role thus conferred upon her, yet, she is no more 'the true hero' for accepting the new responsibility, rather, she is the victim of literary 'drudgery.'⁷⁵ Moreover, Dr Mitford is accused of abusing his wife and daughter's heroism and of displaying arrogance as he despises Mary's literary friends and connections while reaping the benefits of her success in literature.

The extent of male improvidence widely varies in Oliphant's fiction, yet it is very often the professional man whose failure is her target. This tendency starts with her excellent short novella *The Doctor's Family* in the early 1860s, and the topic becomes dominant in some novels in the 1870s. In the novel *At his Gates*, written in 1870, Oliphant briefly touches upon the theme of the improvident artist, who forces himself into suspicious business dealings, in order to support his family. The novels of the 1870s, however, explicitly tackle the theme of male improvidence and its consequence: the curtailment of female domestic authority.

In *The Curate in Charge*, a short novel written in 1876, male improvidence appears in the guise of useful labour.⁷⁶ Reverend St John's labouring in the parish appears an act of devotion and self-sacrifice, in the manner perfectly suited to ministry: he appears truly devoted to offering help to others rather than helping himself. His labour appears particularly self-sacrificial and socially useful in comparison with the attitude of Mr Mildmay, the dilettante bachelor college don, whose main passion is to collect valuable yet lifeless china in the scholarly seclusion at his Oxford college. Dissatisfaction with isolation and with inane objects on the one

hand, and his desire to immerse in the life of common humanity on the other, leads him to secure himself a college living in Rev. St. John's parish. His intentions are, however, less than respectable since his immersion in life is generated by the ultimately selfish impetus 'to occupy, to please himself, not because the work is necessary to others.' [71] This formula would normally set up a binary opposition between the curate's devotion to his parish and Mr Mildmay's devotion to his own salvation by labour, if the consequences of the curate's attitude did not lay bare the fundamentally selfish nature of *his* true devotion. His selfishness and self-absorption consist in the total disregard for the elementary interests of his beloved family: although he is well aware that his living is temporary, he is unprepared to invest in securing a permanent living. This not only threatens the livelihood of his two daughters, but, incidentally, increases their responsibilities well beyond their sphere by reassigning the responsibility for rearing of his two late-born children to them.

Another site of imperfect conjugal relations is related to domestic labour. The domestic, the venue of women's normal existence is never a site of leisure as it was presented not only in Ellis's conduct books, but also in Isabella Beeton's now classic *Book of Household Management*, first published in 1861.⁷⁷ Oliphant analysed the nature of female domestic labour already in her earliest articles. In those articles, her emphasis was upon the work of the working and lower middle classes. As she stated in the 1850s, for the women of the working classes, this labour means the necessary labour of reproduction – the poor needlewoman 'rocks her baby's cradle as she works.'⁷⁸ For the lower middle class wife in shopkeeper families, domestic labour entails acting as the financial household manager, the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer,' which is also a way of participating in general busyness based around the house.⁷⁹ All these representations emphasise the industrious nature of female life in the house. From the 1870s onwards, she added the examination of the wife of the professional man. Her domestic labour fundamentally differs from the previous, more tangible and material types: she engages in performing what we can term as 'surplus labour' or the display of the social signifier. By performing this sort of work, she obviously contributes the solidification of her family's social position. The laborious nature of this enterprise was obvious for Oliphant, but perhaps less so for some of her contemporaries. Eliza Lynn Linton, the author of a number of highly critical articles

on women and on (the lack of) values of domesticity (and of the volume *Ourselves*, 1869) explicitly denied that the solidification of class status involves any female input, and thereby, Oliphant felt, implicitly denied an important aspect of female achievement.⁸⁰

Oliphant's final and most extensive analysis of domestic labour is to be found in her most outspokenly feminist article in *Fraser's Magazine* in May 1880, often cited for its demand to open up the professions to women.⁸¹ Yet, importantly, the major part of the article is devoted to the analysis of the nature of domestic labour, to its relationship to class, and finally, to its social evaluation. As the article describes, labour means different activities to the different social classes: for the lower ones, such as the wife of the working man, it is the question of manual labour, ('cook and clean, and wash and mend'), while the wives of the shopkeeper classes take their share in the family business. [235] For the higher classes, most prominently, for the wife of the professional man, the bulk of labour is less physical, rather, it is the labour involved in 'the production of middle-class gentility:' domestic management and the display of middle class status through the social signficatory processes.⁸² Their labour involves the elementary education of the children and the rounds of entertainment. The labour performed by the wife of the impecunious professional man is best demonstrated by the example of the wife of the university don, whose domestic occupation involves not only looking after her large family of small children, but also looking after the six or eight pupils who live in their house and whom her husband coaches.⁸³ Oliphant, of course, is fully aware that domestic labour is 'unseen' by definition, and that it is task-oriented rather than time-oriented, and she is also aware that there is a social need for it, and she even accepts that it is women who are responsible for it.⁸⁴ What she does criticise, however, is those social relations that keep this sort of labour unnoticed and unappreciated, that consider the wife 'as a passive object of her husband's bounty.'⁸⁵ As she repeatedly emphasises, women 'never have, since the world began, got the credit of that share of the work of the world which has fallen naturally to them.'⁸⁶ Yet by emphasising the ultimate similarity between the work of the Turkish peasant woman and the 'harmless industrious woman nearer home,' and by emphasising that women of all classes receive no appreciation for their incessant unseen labours, Oliphant asserts that the

devaluation of female labour is not a question of specific instances, rather, that it is embedded in the nature of patriarchal (marital) relations.⁸⁷

Oliphant's theoretical analysis of the devaluation of female domestic labour is one of her most powerful expositions of the nature of patriarchy, and during the 1880s, the references to the plight of the professional man's wife and her necessary 'elegant economies' recur with frequency. Again, it is not surprising that her market-driven and highly commercial three-deckers fail to express any similar dissatisfaction. This is not to say that plight of the professional man's wife remains unhonoured in her fiction. In some novels in the 1870s and 1880s, the plight of the wife of the poor professional man – usually that of an impecunious vicar – gains some hearing. Yet, significantly, in the novels the emphasis falls upon individual instances, and upon the virtues of silent sacrifice rather than upon the exploitation of these female sacrifices. This is prominent, for instance, in her otherwise unmemorable novel *Cousin Mary* (1888) where the main character of the novel, the orphan niece of a large landed family, marries an impecunious vicar and subsequently has ten children.⁸⁸ The combination of hardship and the need to maintain gentility inevitably wears Mary down:

He looked at the hand which his wife had put upon his to comfort him. What a pretty hand it had once been! and now how scarred and marked with work, its pretty whiteness gone, its texture spoiled, the forefinger half sewed away, the very shape of it, once so taper and delicate, lost.
[166]

And, as before, it is also emphasised that the domestic is not only the site of labour for the mother of the family, but also the daughters of the house equally participate in domestic labour. This idea is also discussed in the same novel: the daughter of the professional man performs the sort of labour the earlier articles attribute to the daughter of the shopkeeper classes.

Hetty was the best child that ever was born [. . .] She was the best little nurse, the best housemaid, the most handy needle-woman, the most careful little housekeeper in all Summerfield, [. . .] She could make beef-tea and a number of little invalid dishes, better, and more quickly and more neatly than any one [...] that ever was known. [163-4]

Yet, these instances, partly because they focus upon the individual woman, and partly because these laborious relations are counterbalanced by marital affections, provide a less sharp critique of the devaluation of domestic labour than the statements in the articles.

While conjugal relations were subjected to a range of criticism on Oliphant's part, her criticism of existing domesticity does not mean that the ideal of domesticity or sociability implicit in it are rejected. In fact, her emphasis on moral earnestness and sociability increases with time, perhaps to counterbalance the emerging individualistic masculine discourses of profit and competition, which she regarded with the customary mid-Victorian ambivalence. The significance of domestic life is central to her opinions on women's employment and suffrage; and it is precisely the assumed devaluation of women's domestic existence that fires her to dismiss Mill's demand of the franchise as an 'insulting gift.' Yet, her dissatisfaction with existing domestic structures led her to an alternative solution: she attempted to redefine it with different participants. As the previous discussion of spinster-led families has indicated, the theme of surrogate families tempted her from the beginning of her career, no wonder she chose an 'angelic spinster' as the heroine for her first novel. Yet in her earlier work, alternative families always followed the model of the nuclear family, and were described as *viable* alternatives to conjugal relations rather than *idealised or utopian* ones. From the 1870s onwards, however, the character of alternative domesticities radically changes: partly, she expands the definition of domesticity, and partly, she appreciates them for their *superiority* to accepted conjugal relations: they provide compatibility, companionship, and female authority in relevant matters.

The expansion of the meaning of domesticity is perhaps best demonstrated in the attention Oliphant paid to alternative, single-sex, or celibate communities in the 1870s and 1880s. These single-sex communities consisted of biologically non-related members, and their rise was an obvious historical event in the 1850s and 1860s – Anna Jameson in her well-known lecture titled 'Sisters of Charity' openly advocated the creation of Protestant religious orders or sisterhoods.⁸⁹ On the other hand, the popularity of historical novels in the 1860s and 1870s, exemplified by Disraeli's *Lothair* and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861) as well as the popularity of Montalambert's *The Monks of the West* similarly indicated an increasing interest, mostly by male writers, in Catholic male monasticism.⁹⁰

Oliphant's interest in male monasticism derived from her previous experience as a non-fiction writer. Already in the early sixties, William Blackwood

commissioned her to translate Montalambert's historical work, *The Monks of the West*, whose first five volumes she completed during the 1860s.⁹¹ In the 1870s, Oliphant wrote two biographies whose subject required her to familiarise herself with Catholic monasticism: one on the life of *Francis of Assisi* (1870) and the other the *Memoirs of the Count de Montalambert*, (1872). This familiarity with male monasticism is reflected in her practice as a reviewer and as an author of non-fiction. Her interest first appears in her review of Reverend Church's book on Saint Anselm in her series on 'New Books' in 1870.⁹² In this article, Oliphant emphasises that male monasticism is a fundamentally domestic way of life, as it represents the two most cardinal virtues of existence: it is both sociable and laborious. The idea that Catholic monasticism is capable of creating an ideal community is also pertinent in her book *The Makers of Florence* (written over 1874-76) which tells the history of Florence between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries through the lives of three dominant groups defining its culture: the poet Dante, the cathedral builders such as Arnolfo, Giotto, Ghiberti, Donatello, Brunelleschi, and, finally and most significantly, the monks of San Marco.⁹³ In this book just as in the article, the male monastic community is represented as a domestic space, a most 'prosperous, pleasant home. '[204] Not only is it a domestic space, but also it is a space characterised by sociability and laboriousness. As she summarises: 'To be monk in those days was to be a busy, well-occupied, and useful man, in no way shut out from nature.' [200]

While praising male monasticism for its intrinsic values made Oliphant unique amongst her female contemporaries, the interest in women's celibate communities was in common currency in the 1850s and 1860s amongst woman writers. The existence of female communities was both a fictional topic as well as lived experience of Victorian women. As Martha Vicinus explains,

A woman-controlled space became an experiment in the operation of what today would be described as a woman's culture. Since even women who lived outside an institution frequently worked with and through one in order to participate in the benefits of women's community, I believe that examining work-based institutions is essential to understanding the Victorian single woman. Formal institutions were alternatives to the nuclear family.⁹⁴

Although Oliphant did not devote any direct, sociological or political interest to describing or analysing female monastic or working communities in her fiction, the idea still gained some hearing in her non-fiction. Its best representation is found

in her later book, *The Makers of Modern Rome* (1895), arguably the best of her series of coffee-table books, whose first section focuses upon early Christianity in ancient Rome.⁹⁵ The focus of social life here is the society of Marcella, the founder of the first religious convent in Rome. Marcella's house is a hospitable all-female house, consisting of the community of rich, influential women, which in turn becomes the seat of lay influence. This community is self-sufficient and self-generated, despite the fact that often it is St. Jerome who is credited with its foundation. [28] More importantly, this community is an example of monasticism which emphasises the fundamentally humane – active and sociable – character of monastic life. Women's life in this community is characterised by an intensive intellectual engagement and intellectual and spiritual curiosity, by books and literary work – their lives are occupied by 'multiplied and endless talks, consultations, speculation.' [20] In other words, it is a domestic space because it is both laborious and sociable, in other words, it fulfils all the conditions of a home.

'Not left out in the cold:' Alternative domesticities

We have seen the expansion of the definition of the domestic in Oliphant's work in the 1870s: alternative social organisations such as male and female communities can act as surrogate domesticities, as, by being laborious and sociable venues, they fulfil the definition of home. Yet, their home-like quality is simply a potential, for the question is in what way these alternative structures can provide superior communities to the nuclear family. In the following, I shall explore the operation of two of these structures: I shall examine how domestic alternatives provide the capacities of fulfilment (companionship) better than traditional marriage. In this process, I shall examine the workings of asexual friendship and female-female friendship. Then I shall examine how alternative structures provide better conditions for the exercise of maternal authority.

(Asexual friendship)

When Oliphant turned her attention to asexual friendship in the 1870s, the discussions about its very possibility and nature were already established. As Luftig

explains, Mill's unconventional relationship with Harriet Taylor was a matter of public interest from the 1830s onwards, and Mill's *Autobiography* (1854, first published in 1873) reinforced this existing tendency.⁹⁶ The *Autobiography* emphasised the cooperative nature of their relationship and Mill's intellectual debt to Harriet Taylor. Oliphant was no personal friend to Mill, and indeed, any intellectual affinity between them would surprise the reader, although one should not forget about the fact that both of them were Carlyle's close friends.⁹⁷ In addition, Comte's *System of Positive Polity*, a succession of volumes in the 1850s, discussed asexual friendship in elevated terms, while the very existence of Josephine Butler's *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (1869) which was half written by men and half written by women, reasserted the cultural interest in the very issue, and the increasing fashion of publishing artists' memoirs again openly raised the popularity of the issue. These volumes in the 1860s and 1870s not only raised and proved the possibility of heterosexual friendship, but also considered its viability and nature.⁹⁸

The fact that Oliphant became interested in asexual friendship may have had different grounds as well. It is useful to recall that early in her career, she systematically spelt out her belief in the simultaneous sameness *and* difference between the sexes. In her early work, the emphasis was upon difference: it was women's biological and psychological difference that so intimately connected them to domestic existence, and Oliphant asserted the importance of sexual difference to secure credit for women for 'their natural labour.'⁹⁹ Yet, her emphasis shifted to the similarity between the sexes in the 1870s: she felt the need to emphasise that 'Womanhood is great, but Humanity we may surely allow is greater.'¹⁰⁰ She felt that difference exposed women not only to their general devaluation but to intensive misogyny. She felt that she needed to defend women from attacks such as Eliza Lynn Linton's, whose infamous volume *Ourselves* as well as of a succession of misogynistic essays in the *Saturday Review* emphasised women's difference to their disadvantage.¹⁰¹ The emphasis upon sameness also allowed her to represent heterosexual relations without sexual attraction. If sexual difference is only secondary, then multiple ties and asexual connections are also possible between men and women.

Oliphant's interest in asexual relations¹⁰² and her characterisation of asexual relations between men and women as the ideal relationship has been noted before by other critics, and it has also been suggested that the crucial virtue of this sort of relationship that it is 'without hint of sexual involvement.'¹⁰³ Rather than seeing prudishness in her preference of asexual relations, it is probably more relevant to see her vision of asexual friendship as an alternative model for domestic relations, a model which maintains the elements of heterosexuality, but at the same time, it is not based on the idea of marriage.

Oliphant's insistence on the moral superiority of domesticity is obvious in the way in which all heterosexual friendships between men and women are essentially domestic relations. Often, the ideal heterosexual interaction is either a bond between brothers and sisters or between fathers and daughters who set up the ideal household. This is apparent in the example of the Indian Major-General Henry Lawrence whose sister Letitia was his 'most beloved and trusted friend through life.'¹⁰⁴ Harriet Martineau's relationship with her brother is also idealised, for her younger brother James is credited with providing the female author the much needed domestic encouragement, by telling her to 'devote herself' to writing rather than to shirts and socks.'¹⁰⁵ Similarly, her description of the relationship between Charles and Mary Lamb in her *Literary History of England* also represents it as idyllic.¹⁰⁶ Even if people entering into this sort of relationship are not real brothers and sisters, the brother-sister tie still serves as the model for proper heterosexual interaction. Mrs Brookfield, Thackeray's friend is described as his 'sister.'¹⁰⁷ The relationship between Mrs Unwin and Cowper is also likened to ties between brothers and sisters: their friendship is as 'calm,' 'sober and 'affectionate' as though they were brothers and sisters.¹⁰⁸

Women's role in these asexual domesticities can take different shapes. The simplest model is reminiscent of the oft-castigated models of male author-female muse paradigms, in which the female partner's role is that of the passive listener. Most of her examples in her 'New Books' series are drawn from the biographies of prominent artists such the friendship between Mérimée and an unknown lady, Ampère and Mme Récamier, Reade and Mrs Seymour, Thackeray and Mrs Brookfield, and Scott and Lady Louisa Stuart. The emphasis here is on the congenial

affinity between them. Ampère's friend Mme Récamier offers 'sweet and unfailing sympathy' to her friends in their struggles, and her relationship to Ampère is that of 'motherly kindness.'¹⁰⁹ Thackeray's Mrs Brookfield offers 'sympathy,' 'kindness,' 'relief' and 'consolation.'¹¹⁰ The most succinct analysis of asexual friendship between men and women is to be found in Oliphant's late book, *The Makers of Modern Rome* (1895).¹¹¹ One of the central themes in this book is precisely the asexual friendships between early Christian teachers such as St Jerome and their female followers, aristocratic Roman ladies. These friendships obviously follow the master-muse paradigm, such as the relationship between Athanasius and Albina: in whose case, the aristocratic ladies of Rome unfailingly adore Athanasius. [17] Jerome also enjoys the same adoration by the ladies of the Aventine. [54] Marcella's community, on the other hand, adoringly reads Jerome's work. [46] Yet, before dismissing this sort of relationship for its misogyny and the implied subordination of women, it is already important to point out, Oliphant argues, that even an ancillary role attributed to women may serve to dispel misogyny which identified women with the role of the Seductress:

Women have had hard measure from Catholic doctors and saints. Their conventional position, so to speak, is that of the Seductress, always studying how to draw the thoughts of men away from higher things. The East and the West, though so much apart on other points, are at one in this. From the anguish of the fathers in the desert to the supposed difficulties of the humblest ordinary priest of modern times, the disturbing influence is always supposed to be that of the woman. [pp. 49-50]

While women's ancillary role in these relationships may be to the dislike to the twenty-first century reader, some asexual relationships can supersede the above model, and women can enter into collaborative relationships with men. This idea is obviously different from her earlier vision: in the 1850s, the very possibility of a husband and wife team working together invited facetious comments for its unreality.¹¹² By the 1870s, male-female co-operation and labouring together, always in the domestic environment, or perhaps the semi-domestic environment of artists' studios, becomes a real possibility. 'That good-fellowship – to use an inadequate yet not unsatisfactory word, *camaraderie* – familiar yet not disrespectful friendship between men and woman which is so difficult to find in other classes, is unquestioningly a possibility among artists.'¹¹³ Female-male cooperation in the

service of joint production is also particularly pertinent in the discussion of the collaborative efforts between early Christian divines and roman aristocratic ladies in *The Makers of Rome*. Melania and Rufinus build their monasteries together, and live 'on perfectly equal terms.' [39] The most important collaborative relationship is that of St Jerome with Paula and Marcella: Jerome collaborates with Paula and her youngest daughter Eustochium on the most important work of his life, that of rendering the Vulgata into Latin. Not only does Jerome write Marcella's biography, but he asks the ladies, mother and daughter, to comment, compare and *criticise* the quality of his translation. Invariably, female labour involves the revision of manuscripts and role of general criticism of Jerome's labour. [95]

Finally, the most important question arises – what is the essence and ultimate value of these asexual relations? Why are they superior to conjugal relations? Oliphant sensed that these relationships are not taken seriously by the culture. As she points out 'these strange friendships between men and women are considered impossible by many' and that, in general, the world is sceptical about asexual friendships.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the importance and advantages of asexual friendship are particularly prominent when comparing them with marriages. Marriages receive short shrift: often, they are results of which 'fear of public misunderstanding has made husband and wife of a pair of friends.'¹¹⁵ They are often inappropriate, and, at its best, marriage produces 'the crowd of commonplace happinesses.'¹¹⁶ Heterosexual friendships, in contrast to that, are superior, more dignified and honourable than such relations. It is the only type of heterosexual relationships truly based on reciprocity and companionship. The non-hierarchical and co-equal nature of these relationships and their ability to foster female independence is most eloquently explained in relation to Mrs Seymour's relationship to Reade: 'Mrs Seymour preserved her independence, as it is perhaps more difficult for a wife to do, and was evidently consulted on every point, and informed of every step of progress.'¹¹⁷ And as she suggests about Geraldine Jewsbury's household arrangement with her brother: theirs is the kind of household arrangement 'where the master and the mistress are brother and sister instead of husband and wife. It is a delightful relationship, and it is one by which nobody is made to feel as if he were

left out in the cold.’¹¹⁸ In other words, it is reciprocity and cooperation that distinguish these relationships from conjugal relations and elevate them above those.

Asexual friendship and alternative households, again, do not figure very often into her fiction, or rather, they do not move centre-stage. Yet in some pieces, non-conjugal households – described as ideal households – do appear on the margins of the plot. In her short, and unusually well-written novel, *A Curate in Charge*, (1876) the brother-sister household is envisioned as the ideal domestic arrangement by two sisters: the mild Cecily, a living image of her poor mother is dreaming to act as the domestic housekeeper, whereas Mab, the more independent spirit of artistic talent, is dreaming about fulfilling the masculine role of the breadwinner.

Another novel written in the same period, *Young Musgrave* (1877) also explores the theme of non-conjugal household, and emphasises the themes of happiness, female fulfilment and authority in this domestic setup.¹¹⁹ The real protagonist of the novel is Mary Musgrave, the forty-year old sister of the eponymous hero who is the lost and reinstated heir, but he is mostly absent.¹²⁰ Mary Musgrave’s initials and character recall Oliphant’s first representation of the spinster heroine, and in this novel Oliphant further develops the previous comparison between married and unmarried women to the advantage of the latter. Mary Musgrave, similarly to her predecessor Margaret Maitland, compares physically rather favourably with her counterpart, the friend of her youth and the mother of a family, Lady Stanton. Spinsterhood is no physical affliction: Lady Stanton grows rather stout whereas Mary remains ‘still slim and straight as an arrow.’ [76] Yet the physical health and youthfulness of the unmarried woman remains less in the focus here than before; the most important point is Mary Musgrave’s unlimited domestic happiness in her father’s household in comparison with the curtailed domestic authority of her friend. Lady Stanton plays a subordinated and rather belittled role in her own family. Not only is she not the centre of domestic affections (a situation created by her cold and indifferent husband), but her authority does not even extend to matters which would be strictly within her remit. Although Lady Stanton theoretically has the right ‘to use her own horses and carriage,’ [73] nevertheless, she has no authority to do so for fear of provoking the anger of her two big and unlovely stepdaughters. Moreover, although her maternal authority over her own

daughters is unchallenged, their mother's deficient domestic authority marginalises them as well. 'They were wise little women, and were, by nature, of their mother's faction in this house, where both they and she, although she was the mistress of it, were more or less on sufferance.' [78] Again, it is important to emphasise that while the curtailment of the mother's domestic authority appears more situational than paradigmatic, if we read the novel in the light of the articles, the inherent failure of conjugal relations becomes apparent.

In contrast with Lady Stanton's position, Mary Musgrave's fully exercised domestic authority provides happiness and fulfilment for her. The narrator is aware that a father-daughter household would normally conjure images of the desolate home and the solitary woman [4], yet here, neither father nor daughter suffers from dreary solitude. The division of labour between them apparently strictly follows the ideal of separate spheres, as it is reflected in their gendered division of living space in Penningham Castle: Mary occupies the ancient hall – a kind of social thoroughfare as it is the focus of natural, social life in the house; whereas the squire now spends his time in his library, just like Oliphant's other male characters, engaged in the sterile study of genealogy and heraldry, intensively corresponding with *Notes and Queries*. Yet his passivity and self-absorption puts Mary in the otherwise masculine position of the female householder. She 'did everything that was done at Penninghame [...] She managed the estate; kept the bailiff in order, did all the business that was necessary with the lawyer; and what was a greater feat still, kept her father unaware of the almost absolute authority which she exercised in his affairs.' [6] That Mary is the lady of the manor and the 'female squire' stepping into a masculine role is deeply felt in the village. Incidentally, as it transpires, the squire is well aware of Mary knowing everything about his affairs, but when challenged, Mr Musgrave stands up to her defence: 'but women are not considered exactly as they used to be in such matters.' [141] Yet Mary's masculine competence gains no emphasis, rather, it is her uncurtailed domestic authority in her father's house that gains hearing.

Mary's housekeeping and quasi-maternal authority in her family is uncurtailed by male people. Although there is one attempt to restrict it by a wicked and scheming brother, his villainy so blatant that this sort of patriarchal intervention

can easily be dismissed as accidental. The novel eventually finishes on a note of domestic idyll, but on a note of an idyll with a difference: the rightful heir returns and reestablishes domestic peace, but the domestic idyll thus reestablished consists of an adoring brother and sister:

He had all he wanted in his sister's faithful companionship and in his children. There is no more attractive household than that in which, after the storms of life, a brother and sister set up peacefully together the old household gods, never dispersed, which were those of their youth. [393]

(From woman to woman)

While asexual friendship was regarded with considerable 'skepticism' by Oliphant's contemporaries, friendship between women was celebrated, or at least commonly 'acknowledged.'¹²¹ In Oliphant's writing, female-female relations serve as an alternative model for domestic relations: it is a relationship that offers the same kind of companionship that conjugal ones appear to be lacking in. Oliphant's personal investment in her female friends can amply be documented from biographies as well as from her own *Autobiography* – it is enough to consider her long-time friendship with her maternal friend Jane Welsh Carlyle, Mrs Tulloch and Geddie Macpherson.¹²² Of these friendships, her relationship with Jane Welsh Carlyle is best documented. Oliphant met the Carlyles during her research for her biography of Irving, and remained intensely friendly with Jane Welsh Carlyle until the latter's death, and their friendship was not only rooted in their shared Scottish origins, but also in Jane's love of talking which dovetailed very well with Oliphant's ability to listen.¹²³ These examples already suggest that the friendship of other women was of no little significance to the author, and this interest in female friendship, again, is prominent from her writing from early onwards. Indeed, Oliphant's interest in the possibilities of female-female relations has been noted before, and it has also been observed that female-female relations might serve as another potential model for domestic relations.¹²⁴

Considering Oliphant's commitment to the home as the natural habitat for women, it is hardly surprising that female-female friendship and relations also take place in the domestic space. Passionate friendships between prominent women in her journalism abound. It is enough to consider her description of the friendship between

Mary Granville and her friend, appropriately termed Sappho, in her essay 'Two Ladies' in 1862. Sappho is the first love for Mary Granville, but she is only the first one of the long line of friends in Mary Granville's life. Her later friends all share tender passion and a 'crowd of gentle interests and ingenious labours' which keep them happy' with each other.¹²⁵ The same 'absorbing' and 'engrossing' nature characterises Anna Jameson's master-friendship with Lady Byron.¹²⁶ The friendship between Queen Anne and her beloved friend Sarah Duchess of Marlborough is also seen as visionary and intimate, and all these friendships display a degree of passionate intensity.¹²⁷

It is obvious that female friendship plays an important role in the life of the unmarried woman, such as the real life Oliphant or the divorcee Anna Jameson, as they provide natural outlets for emotions. Friendship between unmarried women is often discussed in Oliphant's essays. In 1862, Oliphant commented on Mary Granville's relationship with her girlhood friend Sappho, while in 1879, she discussed Anna Jameson's friendship with the charismatic Lady Byron which follows her short-lived and miserable marriages of both women. While writing about the value of friendship between two unattached women might appear an innocent idea, it is important to point out that the very act of foregrounding and glorifying female friendship already challenged powerful cultural assumptions about female incapacity to maintain long-term intimate friendships. Eliza Lynn Linton, in her infamous 'Girl of the Period' articles in the *Saturday Review* in 1868, passionately argued that women are 'always more or less antagonistic to each other,' and that women 'never support weak sisters [...] shrink from those who are stronger than the average; and if they would speak the truth boldly [...] would confess to a radical contempt for each other's intellect.'¹²⁸ Her sustained attacks not only against individual women for personal shortcomings, but also, being very sceptical about female autonomy in general, expressly denied women the ability to feel mutual sympathy.

The real comparative value of female-friendship and its superiority to conjugal relations can best be described in those cases when married women establish intimate friendships and maintain them simultaneously with marital relations. It has been argued that, because of Oliphant's preference for the marriage

plot, and because her heroines never deliberately choose the establishment of female community or female-female friendship *instead of* marriage, this compensatory relationship is for those who are 'excluded from the race for the greatest prize.'¹²⁹ Yet, a closer examination of the parallel relationships in the same heroine's life always reveals the same pattern: that female friendship is always superior to conjugal relations because it provides the kind of emotional satisfaction in which marital relationships seem deficient.

The most important commentary on female-female friendship in Oliphant's non-fictional writing is to be found in her discussions of the life of Queen Anne – in fact, it is probably Queen Anne's ability to engage in a meaningful female friendship with the Duchess of Marlborough that made this otherwise legendarily dull figure worthy of Oliphant's attention twice. Queen Anne's friendship with Sarah is discussed in an article in *Blackwood's* in 1880 and in a substantial section of her historical *The Reign of Queen Anne* (1894). Their friendship is one of those friendships in which inter-female affections work as standby relations for failed heterosexual affections and thwarted emotions. In Queen Anne's case, her friendship with Sarah is responsible for compensating her for her dull life as queen and as wife to the king consort. The privileged position as Queen of England would in itself force her in a position widely separated from humanity, but her personal position is even more aggravating: she is a 'mother of many children, but childless, the wife of a harmless drone, separated from her natural kindred,' and receives no support and backing up from her husband.¹³⁰ In short, it is her deprivation from the most elemental human ties that makes her so dependent upon her female friends, and it calls for a compensatory friendship with the Duchess in particular. Female friendship for Queen Anne is a 'visionary passion,' a special bond between women, a relationship involving a rather touching, affectionate correspondence.¹³¹

Oliphant's arguably deepest analysis of female friendship is found in her almost entirely neglected short novel *The Two Marys*, written in 1872, published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, and not published in book form until 1896.¹³² *The Two Marys* is a tale of the growing up of Mary Perivale, the teen-age daughter and later orphan of the widowed incumbent of a proprietary chapel near Holborn; a tale of her formative relationships – mutual affections and disagreements – with women and a

man, and her eventual marriage to her accepted lover. The plotline, at first, would suggest that this is a story of romantic love: girl finding love, feeling disappointed in her lover, but finally reaching reconciliation with him. Yet, on closer examination, surprising observations emerge about female friendship, making *The Two Marys* her strongest statement about the invincible, sustaining power of friendship between two women.¹³³

Reading Mary Perivale's tale as romantic love story is more than inviting. It does have all the elements that produce a proper love story: it describes Mary's young womanhood under the roof and authority of the father, the death of the father, the subsequent romance of her courtship, the disagreement, and the final *éclaircissement* of a previous misunderstanding between her and her lover, and the closure of marriage. This romance plotline is supplemented with the description of the developing friendship between Mary Perivale and her young stepmother, Mary Martindale, the emerging conflict between them as Mary discovers that her lover had courted Mary Martindale before, their growing distance, and their half-hearted reconciliation. In this sense, the closure of the novella is the reestablishment of the natural order: the young girl regains her lover – who has, conveniently, become more affluent – while the stepmother has to make do with her baby's company.

When one reads the story as a romance, it becomes obvious that it foregrounds heterosexual ties as determining factors in a woman's life. These heterosexual ties provide a structure that may accommodate female friendship, but only as long as female friendship plays an ancillary, supplementary role. Friendship between two women is subordinated and secondary to heterosexual ties in at least two senses: both temporally and emotionally. Temporally, friendship emerges between women only in the intervals between heterosexual relations. The two Marys develop an intimate relationship only in the emotional vacuum caused by the death of the father/husband, to which the appearance of heterosexual interest – Mary Perivale's for Mr Durham – immediately puts a halt. The dismissal of Mr Durham, again, creates an emotional vacuum in which Mary Perivale can establish a flourishing relationship with another woman, the caring Mrs Tufnell. Yet this relationship, similarly to the previous one between the two Marys, only lasts until the reentry of Mr Durham whose presence makes this relationship with Mrs Tufnell fade

into insignificance. In other words, for Mary Perivale, it appears that there is a temporal alternation between heterosexual and female-female relationships, but always with the privileged position of heterosexual ties, while female-female relationships fill the gap between relationships with men. Heterosexual relationships also take precedence over female friendship in terms of affections. Women's affection for the male character immediately turns the existing or potential female-female friendships into rivalry. This is pertinent in Mary Perivale's jealousy of Mary Martindale, whose appearance incurs fundamental changes in her life. Her jealousy of her stepmother has two different grounds: she feels supplanted both because of the loss of her domestic authority, 'the little offices of authority' the keys, the bills and her tradesmen's books and because of the loss of her father's affections, which had never been demonstrative, yet which previously provided the emotional framework and stability of her life. [26] Mary Martindale, on the other hand, although she feels no jealousy comparable with Mary Perivale's, nevertheless subordinates her affection for Mary to her affection for her husband. The appearance of the second male character, the suitor, creates a replay of previous events in Mary Perivale's mind: again, she feels that Mary Martindale supplants her in a male character's emotions, puts an end to her affections for her, and sees their relationship as competition rather than cooperation. Mary Martindale's feelings towards the younger Mary are, again, somewhat more complex, yet their words echoing each other on the death of the husband and the disappearance of the lover suggest that one's 'own life' is determined by a heterosexual relationship. 'And thus my story ended in seventeen' says Mary Perivale once she had dismissed her lover for having loved before. [73] On the other hand, Mary Martindale talks about meeting her future husband as an event 'which changed my life, which made me another creature.' [93] Though differing in degree, the responses of both women indicate the dominance of the heterosexual script in their lives.

Yet this sort of interpretation is severely undermined by the implications offered by the rhetorical structure. Most of the tale is the first person monologue by the recently married Mary Perivale. Her narrative consists of two main units: the first one tells the story of her life with her father, the father's remarriage and death, her intimate friendship with Mary Martindale, their conflict and finally their renewed

acquaintance on her friend Mrs Tufnell's inspiration. At this point, Mary Martindale's monologue 'Her story' is inserted, which tells about the same events from her perspective – her marriage and her early widowhood, up to her departure from the house and establishing herself with her baby in a school. Finally, the novella is finished by May Perivale describing the tentative attempts at reconciliation, the illness of Mary's friend Mrs Tufnell, and, finally, the *deus ex machina* return of her lover. This rhetorical device, to be followed later by modernist prose, and perhaps by Oliphant's own *A Beleaguered City* (to be written seven years later) offers the advantage of exploring the same sequence of events from a variety of perspectives and providing alternative interpretations. This aspect is undeniable, and Mary Perivale is also very conscious of it: 'I suppose it is true after all that everybody has his or her own point of view, which is different from all others.' [75] The virtues of the pre-modernist experiment aside, the first person reflections also allow the two main characters to perform self-analysis and to compare their heterosexual affections with their affections for each other and for other women. Surprisingly, these self-analyses lay bare the fact that, despite the determining power of the marriage plot in their lives, their mutual friendship provides profound emotional ties.

In the novella, there are three heterosexual relationships that deserve a deeper analysis: Mary's relationship to her father, Mary Martindale's relationship to her husband, and, finally, Mary Perivale's relationship to her suitor Mr Durham. At first, indeed, it appears that the father-daughter relationship connecting Mary Perivale and her father, and the husband-wife one connecting Mary Martindale to her husband, are deeply affectionate, although they display affections to a different degree. Mary Perivale's relationship to her father is characteristically the low-key idyll of unspectacular yet vital domestic affections. What Mary enjoys most about this relationship is the simultaneous closeness and distance: 'I was swinging back a little upon papa's arm, clinging to him, proud of showing that I belonged to him.' [2] Mary Martindale's relationship with her husband appears nevertheless affectionate, and it is precisely the demonstration of these affections that makes Mary Perivale so intrinsically jealous. The affectionate nature of her relationship to her husband is obvious for the daughter: 'As soon as my father and she got together they forgot

everything. They sat and talked together, forgetting my very existence. They went out walking together.’[30] Mary Martindale’s memories of her married life recall the same emotional intensity.

Yet the idyllic relationship connecting both of them to Reverend Perivale is put to the test of retrospective reevaluation by both heroines. Their thriving friendship after the death of the father is first analysed by Mary Perivale, who recognises that it has those values of support, intimacy, and companionship which her relationship to her father clearly did not have:

My life was altogether changed by papa’s death. It is dreadful to say so, but it was not changed for the worse. Perhaps I had been happier in the old days before Mary was ever heard of, when he and I used to sit together, not talking much, and walking together, thinking our own thoughts – together yet without much intercourse [...] But now I began to be able to understand why he had wearied for real companionship, now that I knew what real companionship was... We talked over everything together; the smallest matter that occurred, we discussed it, she and I [...] I had constant companionship, communion, – talk that kept me interested and even amused. I got to be – I am almost ashamed to confess it – happier than I had been for a long time, perhaps than I had ever been in my life. [51-52]

It is obvious, therefore, that for Mary Perivale, the relationship with her stepmother offers a tie superior to the one connecting her to her father. But, importantly, Mary Martindale’s comparison of the heterosexual script in her life with the power of female friendship offers a similar paradigm. Mary Martindale first talks about her relationship with her husband in superlatives: ‘How could I talk about that which was everything to me, which changed my life, which made me another creature?[...] I suppose few women are, as I was, in circumstances to feel this sudden lighting up of existence all of a sudden.’ [93] There is no further evidence to prove the happiness or unhappiness of their relationship. Yet, it is important to note that Mary Martindale immediately qualifies this affection: ‘But I had never really loved anybody, I suppose.’ [93] She continues to explain her emotions in a near-apologetic tone: ‘What attracted me was, I think, chiefly the fact that he was the only educated man I ever saw there – the only being, man or woman, who was not of, or like, the Spicers.’ [94] This apologetic tone is very different from the understanding and self-accepting tone that she uses when describing her emotions for Mary.

I have had a great deal to bear from her; she is not like me; and there are many things I dislike in her [...] but yet I love her [...] downright love

has a different kind of grasp: you cannot get free of that. It is because there is so much fictitious love in the world that people are not aware of the power of the true. [96-97]

In her eyes, the ex-suitor's reappearance did not destroy this relationship: 'Having told you that I loved Mary, I have said all that either woman or man can say.' [103]

And finally, she summarises her need of Mary as follows:

I want her for myself and for my boy. We belong to each other and no one else in the world belongs to us. How often I long for her when I am sitting alone! How many things I have in my mind to say to her! [...] Nothing that I know of, except through her or my baby, can now happen to me. [103-104]

What needs to be added to this monologue differentiating so sharply between the intensity of heterosexual affections and ones for other women is that the other Mary's affections display precisely the same pattern. When recollecting the moment of her lover's proposal, Mary summarises events as this: 'We stood together in the little old study [...] as if we had been in a fairy palace.' [60] But the idyll is immediately undercut by Mary's comment: 'I was not seventeen. I had no experience.' [60]

As the character's commentary suggests, the ostensibly dominant heterosexual affections gain a secondary role when comparing them to the depth and profundity of attachment between women, which appear more satisfactory and reciprocal than heterosexual ones. As both the analysis of asexual friendship and woman-woman friendship has shown, they are superior to conjugal relations, as they offer emotional satisfaction and companionship in a way that marital relations do not. Oliphant's experiment with these structures has demonstrated the superiority of alternative relations.

(Maternal alternatives)

Laboriousness, sociability and companionship, therefore, are appropriately provided by alternative domesticities. Yet, there is one more function that they properly fulfil: alternative communities secure and guarantee maternal moral authority in ways traditional and conjugal families do not. In the last section, I would like to comment on those radical visions that suggest that alternative domesticities

(of any variety) do secure and support maternal authority and do create the ideal conditions for bringing up children.

That motherhood is a position of authority is obvious already in Oliphant's earliest writing: the mother is the moral educator of her children.¹³⁴ Margaret Maitland exercises beneficial influence over the moral development of her surrogate daughter. Mrs Atheling is similarly responsible not only for the physical but also for the moral welfare of her children, as is demonstrated by her desire to protect her daughters. Yet earlier, as was shown in the articles, Oliphant was so certain about the direct connection between the conjugal family and maternal authority that any domestic threat to maternal authority was not even raised as a possibility – her 'full weight and authority' extended to maternal matters as well. In the early period, the spinster-led families served to provide an alternative model for domesticity. Towards the end of Oliphant's career, they appear as the ideal.

A new vision of maternity first secured Oliphant's attention during her exploration of French family types. Her sensitivity to these different nuclear family structures originated from her uprooted position: from the difference between her Scottish upbringing and her anglicised adulthood. Modern research has proved the existence of different types of kinship structures within the British Isles.¹³⁵ But the English- Scottish difference remains rather unhonoured in her journalism: she prefers to focus on a comparative examination of English and French types of domesticity. This, again, stems from her unique experience among Victorians, which involved a personal experience of cultural comparison. By the 1870s, Oliphant was arguably more widely travelled than most of her contemporaries, and was more familiar with Continental Europe than most of her contemporary *female* authors. She had seen more than Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot – her experience was probably only comparable with that of Frances Trollope.¹³⁶ Being a professional journalist for *Blackwood's* also forced her to engage with places she visited and her travels yielded not only numerous articles for the magazine, but also presented her with possibility of the cultural analysis of different kinship structures, first and foremost, the difference French and English structures of kinship.

French domestic habits enjoyed some of her attention from the earliest onwards, but initially, Oliphant denied that they are domestic in any sense. As her

very early, and somewhat amusing statement (quoted earlier) puts it: '[t]he Parisians are not given to domesticity, nor are they a virtuous people.'¹³⁷ By 1870 Oliphant was sufficiently versed in French affairs to establish that domestic life is not absent in France, but is simply different because the constitution of the family is different. This observation is reinforced by the research of twentieth century family historians and anthropologists, who suggest that despite the simultaneous rise of the affective nuclear family both in France and Britain, the two countries were (and to some extent, still are) characterised by fundamentally different family structures.¹³⁸ While the dominant family type of England is the 'absolute nuclear family' which prohibits the co-residence of parents and grown-up children, the dominant family type of France entails various vertical types that encourage rather than prohibit multi-generational co-residence, and which define the structure of these families differently.¹³⁹

Oliphant defined the difference between domestic relations in England and France by their different foci: as she notes, domestic relations in England focus upon conjugal relations, whereas in France they focus upon the mother-child dyad. This, in turn, leads to a different concept of marriage: English marriages are based on 'the close union' in other words, upon romantic love.¹⁴⁰ French marriages, if not wholly those of convenience, are less intent on separating the family of destination from the family of origin, resulting in 'the comparative laxity of the marriage tie.'¹⁴¹

Oliphant analysed the republican types (as opposed to the English conjugal ones) in the context of different prominent women, through the upbringing of Mme Montagu, Mme Récamier, and Mme Roland. The 'comparative laxity of the marriage tie' is a shared characteristic between them, most explicitly analysed in relation to the life story of Mme Montagu, one of the aristocratic victims of the Terror in an article in the series 'New Books' in *Blackwood's* (1870). Mme Montagu's mother, the Duchess of Ayen, accepts her husband as 'friend,' from whom she is not entirely independent, yet who plays no significant role in her life. She treats him with 'charming friendly regard,' and she shares mutual interests and pleasures with him, yet she 'never pretend[s] to have but one life' with him.¹⁴² This results in the Duchess' relative autonomy from her husband, without whom she is 'quite able to do ... when need is.'¹⁴³ Mme Récamier's marriage to her elderly

husband the reformed rake is not 'the close union:' she is obviously not in love with him, but it is probably the social acceptability of the comparative laxity of marriage tie and her husband's trust in her virtue that allow her to support the best men of her time.¹⁴⁴ Mme Roland's marriage to her husband the pedant bureaucrat is shown 'in action,' and it also shares similar characteristics. Her motives for marrying her husband have little to do with romantic love: instead of feeling 'the enthusiasm which would have become the impassioned soul,' she married M. Roland out of rather practical considerations, partly, to free herself from her father who had squandered her little fortune, and, partly, to end her sense of isolation.¹⁴⁵ Her behaviour during her marriage is driven by a strong sense of duty as she feels responsible for the 'daily happiness of two individuals,' and she makes herself responsible for becoming the daily inspiration of his everyday life.¹⁴⁶ Yet this tenderly indifferent relationship between husband and wife appears to Oliphant less satisfactory in 1883 than it was before: not only is Roland less appreciative of his own diminished role in his wife's life, but Mme Roland is also more interested in securing herself other compensatory interests, the result of which is her involvement in politics on the one hand, and on the other, her unfortunate affections for Buzot, a character as inferior to her as her husband. Nevertheless, the sentiment for Buzot leaves 'her duty and her family untouched.'¹⁴⁷

Domestic affections, therefore, are not based on the privileged tie between husbands and wives. Rather, they centre upon the exquisite bond between the mother and children, and very often extend to other older female family members. Duchess Ayen, the first of the *ancien régime* patrician ladies brings up her five daughters, unaided by her husband, under circumstances strongly resembling later biedermeier idylls: the cameo describes the daughters intimately grouping around their mother, in a tranquil domestic picture, engaging in writing, working and talking. In other words, their life is characterised by intimacy, work and deep sociability. Mme Roland's family is not largely different from that: both her family of origin and her family of destination were organised around mother-daughter or female family-child connection. She also spends her childhood in a community of women, who provide careful education for her; her mother expresses 'all the watchfulness for her daughter which is natural to her race' and this is complemented by serious intellectual

training.¹⁴⁸ The female community is equally responsible for introducing Manon to higher society, and her entire upbringing equips Mme Roland with the fortitude that her later political role is to require.

Alternative models of the family appear not only sociable and industrious institutions, but they also appear to support female domestic and especially maternal authority to a degree uncommon in traditional families. This is particularly characteristic of female domestic communities. Unfortunately, probably because of the market pressures – the demands of the marriage plot and those of the three-decker – the theme of independent female community with its subversive powers never moves centre-stage in her three-deckers. Yet matrifocal families as ideal loci for maternal authority appear increasingly often in some of her shorter fiction from the 1870s onwards.

An early experiment for the thriving of maternal authority is to be found in her short story *A Beleaguered City* (1880). Social authority in general and female authority in particular are pertinent themes in this well-known and duly famous novella, one of Oliphant's most aesthetically successful pieces of fiction.¹⁴⁹ The novella is mainly concerned with the occupation of the Burgundian town Semur by the spirit of the dead who want to punish the inhabitants for their rampant materialism and therefore, the citizens suffer expulsion from their city.

The expulsion of the citizens offers an interesting moment in the text, for it enables a brief experiment with an alternative social structure, in a utopian space, outside the walls of the community of Semur. The genesis of the novella shows the increasing importance of the theme of the alternative community. The first, shorter version, published in the *New Quarterly Magazine* in January 1879, already uses the well-known structure of the mayor narrating the bulk of the tale. This version contains one female voice narrating the events outside the city boundaries, that of the narrative of the Mayor's wife in Chapter 8. While revising the novella for publication as a book (and Oliphant very rarely made substantial revisions during her long career), Oliphant added the narrative of Madame Veuve Dupin, and the two female narratives taken together provide the possibility of some exploration of the alternative community of women and children. The nature of this community and the way female authority are represented in this community could best be described

by comparing it to the scope of female authority in the 'normal' life of Semur. However, it is impossible as women are conspicuously absent from the Mayor's narrative. What the reader finds out about the alternative, female community, though, is that this isolated, utopian, a counter-public space can prove women's ability to organise a community. Not only is the community self-sufficient, but also it is an industrious and hospitable – domestic – space. This is not to say that the female community is represented in idyllic terms: it is torn with internal power struggles and opposing views on religion, but it demonstrates women's capability of self-help and survival. It also proves that the female alternative community is capable of fulfilling the vital tasks of preserving 'the children and the sick.' [75]

The ability of the female community to generate and accommodate maternal authority became an increasingly important issue for Oliphant during the early 1890s, and this, arguably, reflects her engagement with the new visions of motherhood as imagined by the New Woman novelists.¹⁵⁰ New utopian versions of motherhood are particularly pertinent in three of her important pieces of late fiction: in a three-decker, *The Marriage of Elinor* (1892) and in two linked short stories, 'The Story of a Wedding Tour' and 'John' published in the posthumous volume *A Widow's Tale* (1898).¹⁵¹ The plotlines of these three narratives repeat and reenact the themes represented in her journalism about the ability of an alternative community to support maternal authority and to bring up the young. Yet her fiction also offers more than her journalism, for while the articles, based on empirical experience, simply explore the possibilities of different existing conjugal structures to perform these functions, the tales envision utopian alternatives for non-conjugal spaces where maternal authority thrives.

The thriving of maternal authority in a female community is a central issue in the late novel *The Marriage of Elinor* (1892). The novel is an unnecessarily extended three-decker version of a shorter novella, 'The Story of a Wedding Tour,' probably written in the same time.¹⁵² The antecedents of the alternative domesticity are this: the marriage of the purely raised Elinor to the man-about-town Phil Compton collapses as Elinor can no longer suffer the pain and humiliation caused by her rakish husband. Elinor decides to return to her mother's house with her new-born son.

The capacity of the alternative community to bring up children needs to be measured against the incapacity of Elinor's marriage to do the same. Considering Oliphant's lifelong commitment to the indissolubility of marriage with children, it is important to emphasise that while Oliphant never endorsed the practice of separation or divorce for women with children, female moral autonomy in itself and as divorce ground became an increasingly important issue for her in the 1890s, as is attested by her acceptance of Nora's choice in Ibsen's controversial *A Doll's House*. In her brief reference to the play, she suggests that it is Nora's desire to maintain her moral integrity (rather than frustration or love for someone else) and her discovery of 'how little she counted personally' in the house of her husband – that justified her decision to leave her husband.¹⁵³ Elinor has no experience of the extent to which her conjugal family is unable to bring up her son, as her departure is a preventive step, based on premonition and general experience of her husband's financial and sexual immorality. Her husband's behaviour does not threaten her personally, but the danger is, she feels, that the effects of the bad example may imply a moral threat for her son that she will be unable to counter. Her own sense of Right and Wrong is made explicit by Elinor's words:

What! take my child to grow up in that tainted air; give him up to be taught such things as they can teach! Never, never, never! His natural place, did you say? I would rather the slums of London were his natural place. He would have some chance there! If I could bear it for myself, yet I could not for him – for him most of all.' [vol.2. p.217]

Elinor, therefore, decides to leave her husband, and moves into her mother's house, her 'natural home,' where she sets up the alternative, matrifocal community in the distant village in the Lake District. [vol.2. p.150] The community consists of herself, her mother and her cousin the successful lawyer who, though a male, is 'not a marrying man,' and is sufficiently emasculated not to present any threat to Elinor's idyllic authority. Regrettably, the nature of the idyll is not articulated in detail, for most of the second half of the novel is taken up with proving Phil Compton's dishonest business dealings. Yet, the venue is sharply contrasted with the affluent, superficial and idle atmosphere of London. The domesticated rural idyll – carrying the fictitious names of Windyhill and Lakeside – is not only associated with human fellowship and conversation, but also with satisfaction through labour: Elinor and her mother perform the work of genteel housekeeping while John Tatham, the lawyer is

openly praised for his professional achievement. Yet the very success of the experiment is proved by the successful upbringing of Elinor's son. Not only is the boy academically successful in securing himself a prestigious scholarship, and not only is his relationship to his mother that of perfect confidence, but the major test takes place when the 'real world' enters their universe. Phil Compton, the boy's father inherits a title, re-linking the boy to his paternal lineage, and therefore exposing both the utopian nature of the community as well as the fact that Elinor had lied to the boy about his origin. Yet not even this disclosure leads to Elinor 'losing the allegiance of her son,' as he sides with his mother despite the glamorous attractions of paternal inheritance. His imminent adjustment to the new class position, for which the shabby genteel idyll in no way prepared him, proving that the alternative community was capable of equipping the boy with the necessary upbringing. [vol.3 p.260]

The capacity of the alternative community to bring up children and to encourage and support female maternal authority is more closely elaborated the two short stories, 'A Story of a Wedding Tour,' and its sequel 'John.'¹⁵⁴ These two narratives provide a slightly alternative plotline to *The Marriage of Elinor* where the lower class setting of the alternative community allows a closer analysis of the laborious nature of the community. 'A Story of a Wedding Tour' and 'John' provide a tale of an orphaned girl, raised to be a governess by friends who are not openly hostile but largely indifferent to her. In due course, Jeanie is acquired by the elderly and wealthy Rosendale. As a result of a series of coincidences on their wedding tour in France, Rosendale loses track of Jeanie on the railway network of France – a separation unwilled, but accepted with satisfaction and outright relief by the young woman. Jeanie, subsequently, makes a conscious decision about not returning to her husband, settles down in a Mediterranean village of France, and lives contentedly with her son born nine months later, until the reappearance of Rosendale, who, accidentally passing through the village on a train, catches a glimpse of Jeanie and her grown-up son, and dies in an apoplectic fit.

The two stories taken together provide the exploration of the ways in which Jeanie, defined by her motherhood, establishes her independent life in a utopian space and in an alternative community. Just as in the previous story, she has no

literal experience of conjugality curtailing maternal authority; nevertheless, the shortcomings of conjugality and the absence of companionship in marriage becomes obvious for Jeanie in the short time that she spends with Rosendale. Jeanie feels that 'her husband was in love with her beauty but... indifferent to herself' ['The Story' p. 406], and Jeanie, 'athirst' for love, ['The Story,' p. 407] cannot expect much more than 'to be petted like a lapdog and then left.' [407]

The alternative community replacing Jeanie's short-lived marriage is described in terms of sociability and labour. Jeanie's seamless fitting into the French rural community (St. Honorat in 'The Wedding Tour,' Cagnes in 'John') is not idyllic or uncomplicated – not only is she a foreigner, singled out by her different clothes and religion, but also a single mother with an untrustworthy story – yet, 'though she was English, and silent, and a stranger, was rather popular than otherwise in Cagnes.' ['John,' p. 322] Her sense of belonging is also increased by her most important relationship connecting her to the village priest, in whom she confides about the existence of her husband, but who, again is a sufficiently non-gendered figure to leave her maternal authority intact. Her life is characterised by incessant labour, sitting precisely on the borderline of her dual class position – simultaneously a trained governess with the appropriate accomplishments and a poor widow – as her nationality and her son's nationality intermingles native English and acculturated French elements. Her life in the village is reminiscent of self-sustaining economy:

There were various things which she did to get a living, and got it very innocently and sufficiently, though in the humblest way. She taught English to the children of some of the richer people in the village: she taught them music. [...] Then she worked very well with her needle, and would help on emergency at first for pure kindness [...] She found a niche in the little place which she filled perfectly, though only accident seemed to have made it for her. ['The Story,' p. 420]

Again, as in the previous novel, the success of the alternative community in enabling her to perform her maternal role is tested by the collapse of the utopian idyll. The sudden reentry of the 'real world' is caused by a change similarly cataclysmic to the one that had created it: Rosendale, while passing through the village on the train, catches sight of Jeanie, and dies in a sudden apoplectic fit 'with bloated features,' and John's parentage as well as his wealth come to light. ['John' p. 326] The

disclosure of paternal lineage not only underlines the utopian nature of the idyll, but also seriously tests its success. This story places more emphasis upon the boy's shattered confidence in the mother: significantly, however, he is not disappointed in his mother for her denial of his paternal inheritance, rather he regrets his loss of illusions concerning a fictitious sailor father, lost at sea, who 'was the true ideal, without fault, full of unknown treasures of tenderness and wisdom.' [John, p. 328] Nevertheless, John's final decision that he would go out to work and 'begin his life' ['John,' p. 335] and that he would defend his mother (though with bitterness) proves that the maternal experiment to sustain meaningful ties and to prepare John for life was successful.

This chapter has begun with Oliphant's description of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, which she read as a novel set to undermine the well established foundations of society: marriage and the family. The vitriolic tone of the article somewhat unsurprisingly provoked Hardy to the similarly vitriolic and condescending counterattack against the 'poor lady' whose hopeless conservatism prevented her from understanding his truthful representation of sexuality.¹⁵⁵ Yet, in the light of Oliphant's experiments with alternative forms of domesticity, though, one might claim that Oliphant may have read Hardy's fiction from a rather dogmatic position, nevertheless, her own experiments of alternative domesticities offer similarly important challenges to established models of conjugality. In the next chapter, I shall continue the exploration of Oliphant's vision of sexual difference, and I shall discuss her novel contribution to the Victorian analysis of literary authorship.

ENDNOTES

¹ 'The Anti-Marriage League,' *BM* Jan 1896, p. 144.

² Florence Nightingale, 'Cassandra,' in Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Woman's Movement*, London: Virago, 1978, pp. 395-421. Cited from p. 404 and p. 406.

³ It was first published in Strachey's book *The Cause*. For an interesting discussion of 'Cassandra' see Rosalind Delmar, 'What is feminism?' in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (eds.), *What is Feminism?*

Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, pp. 8-33. Delmar points out the fact that Nightingale saw her own position as a general phenomenon, rather than a class-based situation.

Quoted from p. 16.

⁴ Duncan Crow, *The Victorian Woman*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1971; Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1985, on women see pp. 341-393. Also see Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971.

⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Classes 1780-1850*, London: Routledge, 1987, p. 29

⁶ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992, p. 19.

⁷ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995, p. 12.

⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 13.

⁹ Langland, *Nobody's*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing in the Domestic Sphere,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 119-141. Cited from p. 123.

¹¹ Monica F. Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. A condensed version of her book was published under the title 'Maximizing Oliphant: Begging the Question and the Politics of Satire' in Nicola Diane Thompson, *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 99-115.

¹² Cohen, *Professional*, p. 9.

The work of Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey is also relevant in this context, although their work has provided little assistance in analysing women's lives in the domestic sphere. (Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986 and Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, London: Virago Press, 1988.)

¹³ Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Reform and Narrative Form: 1832-1867*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985.

¹⁴ Tess Cosslett, *Woman to Woman*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1998, Pauline Nestor, *Female Friendship and Communities: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.

¹⁵ Victor Luftig, *Seeing Together: Friendship between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf*, Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1993.

¹⁶ The most succinct exposition of the links between Evangelical ideas on the superiority of the domestic and ideas of domesticity can be attributed to Catherine Hall, who unquestioningly links the moral superiority of the domestic arena to

Evangelical ideas, and it seems that this is the general critical consensus. The dichotomy of the morally corrupt public versus the pure home was generally accepted, see the most paradigmatic or characteristic novels of the period such as *Hard Times*, *North and South* and others

¹⁷ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 149.

¹⁸ 'Modern Light Literature – Society,' *BM* Oct 1857, p. 427.

¹⁹ 'Social Science,' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 712.

²⁰ 'Modern Light Literature – Traveller's Tales,' *BM*, Nov 1855, p. 598.

²¹ 'Social Science,' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 710.

²² 'Social Science,' *BM* Dec 1860, p. 709.

²³ The idea of sameness and difference has received some attention by Oliphant's critics. Jessop, correctly, suggests that Oliphant's views on the relationship between men and women are fundamental to her views on the woman question. (Ralph Jessop, 'Viragos of the Periodical Press: Constance Gordon-Cumming, Charlotte Dempster, Margaret Oliphant and Christina Isobel Johnstone,' in Douglas Gifford and Dorothy Macmillan (eds.), *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997, pp. 216-231.) Jessop also notes the simultaneous sameness and difference between the sexes, but he considers the co-existence of these two categories a self-contradiction, suggesting that, as a result, '[t]aken collectively, her views on the woman question, are more confused than complex.' [p. 223] For Jessop, similarity and difference are not dualistic but dichotomous categories.

²⁴ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 145.

²⁵ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 381.

²⁶ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 381.

²⁷ 'Thackeray,' *BM* Jan 1855, p. 95.

²⁸ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 145.

²⁹ 'The Great Unrepresented,' *BM* Sep 1866, p. 372.

³⁰ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 145.

³¹ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 145.

³² 'Modern Light Literature–Poetry,' *BM* Feb 1856, p. 132.

³³ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 383.

³⁴ Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 81. The concept of 'affective nuclear family' refers to the family type emerging in the late eighteenth century which is nuclear in terms of size and co-residence, and is affective in terms of privileging affective ties to lineage in constituting a family.

³⁵ Langland, *Nobody's* p. 111.

³⁶ 'The Laws,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 382.

³⁷ 'Modern Light Literature– Society,' *BM* Oct 1857, p. 427.

³⁸ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 385.

³⁹ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 15

⁴⁰ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 387.

⁴¹ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 387.

⁴² *The Athelings*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1857.

⁴³ Elizabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. p. 260.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *Professional Domesticity*. The concept 'professional domesticity' is the central concept of the text.

-
- ⁴⁵ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 17.
- ⁴⁶ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, 360.
- ⁴⁷ Langland, *Nobody's*, p. 9.
- ⁴⁸ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 17.
- ⁴⁹ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993, p. 20.
- ⁵⁰ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 382.
- ⁵¹ To my knowledge, there has been relatively little written on the spinster debate recently, some critics touch upon it, such as Poovey and Auerbach, but no succinct summary of it seems to exist. The best historical discussion of the debate is still E. K. Helsinger., R. A. Sheets, and W. R. Veeder, *The Woman Question: 1837-1883*. Volume 3: Social Issues, New York: Garland, 1983, pp. 134-141.
- ⁵² 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 147.
- ⁵³ Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, London: Hutchinson, 1987., p. 84.
- ⁵⁴ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 148.
- ⁵⁵ 'The Condition of Women,' *BM* Feb 1858, p. 148.
- ⁵⁶ Davidoff-Hall, *Family*, p. 58.
- ⁵⁷ *Autobiography* (ed.) Elizabeth Jay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Henceforth: *JAL*.
- ⁵⁸ *Miss Margaret Maitland*, London: Colburn, 1849, *Orphans*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1858.
- ⁵⁹ This connection is well worth exploring, although apparently not much attention has been devoted to the ways Oliphant reworked previous literary traditions. Oliphant was undoubtedly familiar with Ferrier, to whose oeuvre she constantly referred, and whose writing she analysed in her three volume *The Literary History of England: 1790-1825* (London; Macmillan, 1882). However, there is no information available about her familiarity with Ferrier in 1849. Nevertheless, the thematic familiarity and the recurrence of names suggest that she was inspired by Ferrier.
- ⁶⁰ 'Passages' *Athenaeum* Nov 24, 1849, p. 1178 Cited by Merryn Williams, *Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986, p. 9.
- ⁶¹ Langland, *Nobody's*, p. 113
- ⁶² *Orphans*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1858.
- ⁶³ Florence Nightingale put her talents to public use in the Crimean War as she organised the care of wounded soldiers. See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Virago Press: London, 1988, ch. 6.
- ⁶⁴ 'The Great Unrepresented,' *BM*, Sep 1866, p. 367.
- ⁶⁵ Oliphant's *Autobiography* represents this event as the major motive behind the change in her course of life. See *JAL*, pp. 131- 132. Quoted from p. 131.
- ⁶⁶ Emmanuel Todd, *The Causes of Progress*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 28-63.
- ⁶⁷ Victor Luftig, *Seeing Together: Friendship Between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf*, Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1993, p.21
- ⁶⁸ 'Scotland and her Accusers,' *BM* Sep 1861, p. 267.
- ⁶⁹ 'The Lives of Two Ladies,' *BM* Apr 1862, p. 404.
- ⁷⁰ 'The Lives,' *BM* Apr 1862, p. 415 and p. 416.
- ⁷¹ 'Charles Reade's Novels,' *BM* Oct 1869, p. 495.
- ⁷² 'The Lives,' *BM* Apr 1862, p. 406.

- ⁷³ 'Elizabeth and Mary,' *BM* Apr 1867, p. 400.
- ⁷⁴ 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,' *BM* Jul. 1868, pp. 1-25.
- ⁷⁵ 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford,' *BM* March 1870, p. 308.
- ⁷⁶ *The Curate in Charge*, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987.
- ⁷⁷ Isabella Beeton's book was perhaps the most famous of manuals of domestic management, but not the only one. Domestic management, and the middle class housewife's superintendence, and generalship and the government of the household over domestic affairs are pertinent features both in etiquette books in the 1840s and 1850s, (e.g. John Butcher, *Instructions in Etiquette in the Use of All* (1847) *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen*) as well as in more explicit housekeeping manuals such as Cassell's *Book of the Household*. For a discussion of female domestic labour as managerial labour, see Langland, *Nobody's Angels*, pp. 45-49.
- ⁷⁸ 'Modern Light Literature – History' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 441.
- ⁷⁹ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 387.
- ⁸⁰ Eliza Lynn Linton, *Ourselves: Essays on Women*, London: Routledge, 1869.
- ⁸¹ 'The Grievances of Women,' *Fraser's* May 1880. Also reprinted in Susan Hamilton, 'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors:' *Victorian Writing on Women by Women*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995, pp. 231-244. Page references are to the reprinted edition.
- ⁸² Terry Lovell, *Consuming Fiction*, London: Verso, 1987, p. 38.
- ⁸³ See also 'Looker-On,' *BM* Oct 1896, pp. 487-8.
- ⁸⁴ 'Old Saloon,' *BM* Jan 1888, p. 120.
- ⁸⁵ 'The Grievances,' *Fraser's*, May, 1880, p. 236.
- ⁸⁶ 'The Grievances,' *BM* May, 1880, p. 235.
- ⁸⁷ 'The Old Saloon,' Feb 1892, p. 310.
- ⁸⁸ *Cousin Mary*, London: S. W. Partridge and Co, 1888.
- ⁸⁹ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: 1850-1920*, London: Virago, 1985, p. 46.
- ⁹⁰ The official acceptance of Catholicism was on the increase after the 1850s, as demonstrated not only by the sensational conversion by the Tractarian leader Henry Newman (1845), but also by the fact that Pope Pius IX established 13 sees in England and named Cardinal Wiseman Archbishop of Westminster. Another spectacular event was the conversion of the prominent Anglican churchman Henry Manning, who would then succeed Wiseman as Archbishop of Westminster in 1865. See Christine L. Krueger, 'Clerical,' in Herbert F Tucker (ed.), *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 141-154, esp. pp. 152-153.
- ⁹¹ The translation of the first two volumes was published by Blackwood in 1861, and volumes 3-5 in 1867.
- ⁹² 'New Books,' *BM* Nov 1870, pp. 615-19.
- ⁹³ *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan, 1877.
- ⁹⁴ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: 1850-1920*, London: Virago, 1985, quoted by Cohen, *Professional*, p. 100-101.
- ⁹⁵ *The Makers of Modern Rome*, London: Macmillan, 1897.
- ⁹⁶ Luftig, *Seeing*, Ch. 1.
- ⁹⁷ Luftig, *Seeing*, p. 31.
- ⁹⁸ Luftig, *Seeing*, pp. 19-57.

- ⁹⁹ The same idea of primary sameness and secondary difference does not only apply to the sexes: but also to people belonging to different nations and to different historical periods, and the reiteration of this idea starts precisely at the same point. In 'New Books,' June 1872 suggests that the division of rank (a secondary characteristic) does not erase the division of nature (primary characteristic), and a similar statement is repeated in 'Englishmen and Frenchmen' *BM* Aug. 1878, p. 219. Similarly, her analysis of ancient classics suggests that primary characteristics of humanity do not change in time, while secondary ones do. Also see 'New Books,' March 1878, and 'The Ancient Classics,' Sep 1874. All were published in *Blackwood's Magazine*.
- ¹⁰⁰ 'New Books,' *BM* Aug. 1870, p. 174.
- ¹⁰¹ Eliza Lynn Linton published a series of articles under the title 'The Girl of the Period' in the *Saturday Review* between March and December 1868. These articles contain vitriolic criticism addressed against women, for all sort of shortcomings, but mostly, for not adhering to the early nineteenth ideal of puritan domesticity.
- ¹⁰² I am indebted to Victor Luftig's important study *Seeing Together: Friendship Between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf*, for a discussion of mid-Victorian ideas on heterosexual friendship. For the mid-Victorian situation, see especially Part I.
- ¹⁰³ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, p. 101.
- ¹⁰⁴ 'New Books,' *BM* Dec 1872, p. 748.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, pp. 480-481.
- ¹⁰⁶ *The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1882. vol. 2, ch. 1.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Nov 1887, p. 700.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Literary History* vol. 1, p. 49.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Englishmen and Frenchmen,' *BM* Aug. 1878, p. 235.
- ¹¹⁰ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Nov 1887. pp. 700.
- ¹¹¹ *The Makers of Modern Rome*, London: Macmillan, 1897.
- ¹¹² 'The Art of Cavilling,' *BM* Nov 1856, p. 621.
- ¹¹³ 'New Books,' *BM* Aug 1870. p. 187.
- ¹¹⁴ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 457.
- ¹¹⁵ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Jul 1887, p. 105.
- ¹¹⁶ 'Englishmen and Frenchmen,' *BM* Aug. 1878, p. 236.
- ¹¹⁷ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Jul 1887, p. 105.
- ¹¹⁸ 'The Looker-On,' *BM* Dec 1895, p. 918.
- ¹¹⁹ *Young Musgrave*, London: Macmillan, 1883.
- ¹²⁰ The lost and later recovered will or heir motive was rather popular with Oliphant, for the obvious potential of providing the necessary amount of padding for the popular three-deckers. One of the these early novels is *Zaidee*.
- ¹²¹ Luftig, *Seeing*, p. 19.
- ¹²² What proves the power and value of her friendship with Geraldine McPherson is the fact that Oliphant saw through the press Geddie's biography of her aunt Anna Jameson, and Oliphant added a 'Preface' to it. (Postscript to the Preface to *Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson*, by her niece Gerardine Macpherson, and edited for the press by Oliphant (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1878) pp. xiii-xvii.)

- ¹²³ D. J. Trela, 'Margaret Oliphant's "bravest words yet spoken" on Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle,' in *The Carlyle Annual* 18, 1998, pp. 153-166.
- ¹²⁴ There are brief references to female-female relations in the work of other critics. For instance, see Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, pp. 99-101.
- ¹²⁵ 'The Lives of Two Ladies,' *BM* Apr 1862, p. 407-8.
- ¹²⁶ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 214.
- ¹²⁷ *Historical Sketches of the Reign of Queen Anne*, London: Macmillan, 1894, ch. 1.
- ¹²⁸ Eliza Lynn Linton, 'Female Amenities,' *Girl of the Period*, I. 84. Cited by Pauline Nestor, *Female Friendship and Communities: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1985, p. 14.
- ¹²⁹ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, p. 101.
- ¹³⁰ 'The Reign of Queen Anne,' *BM* Feb 1880 p. 146.
- ¹³¹ *The Reign of Queen Anne*, London: Macmillan, 1894.
- ¹³² *The Two Marys*, London: Methuen, 1896.
- ¹³³ It is simply incomprehensible why *The Two Marys*, one of Oliphant's best short novellas, has received absolutely no critical attention. Even Jay's very comprehensive literary biography of Oliphant, providing so many lengthy essays, fails to devote more than five lines to it. On the other hand, the reviewer in the July 25, 1896 number of the *Spectator*, spoke about it very highly, and, correctly, likened it to the quality of *The Beleaguered City*. p. 119
- ¹³⁴ 'Charles Dickens,' *BM* Apr 1855, p. 451.
- ¹³⁵ Emmanuel Todd, *The Causes of Progress*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 28-63.
- ¹³⁶ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, pp. 192-199.
- ¹³⁷ 'Modern Light Literature,' *BM* Nov 1855, p. 598.
- ¹³⁸ See Emmanuel Todd, *The Causes of Progress*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987. It is important to note that Todd's argument about the versatility and coexistence of different family structures challenges the traditional models of the unilinear development of the family, represented most famously perhaps by arguments of the Norman Stone kind. Todd, in contradiction, suggests that kinship structures have historically been different in different geographical regions. His discussion is particularly relevant from the perspective of differentiating between English and French family types.
- ¹³⁹ Todd, *The Causes*, esp. 51-54.
- ¹⁴⁰ 'Englishmen and Frenchmen' *BM* Aug. 1878, p. 234-235.
- ¹⁴¹ 'New Books,' *BM* May 1870, p. 637.
- ¹⁴² 'New Books,' *BM* May 1870, p. 637.
- ¹⁴³ 'New Books,' *BM* May 1870, p. 637.
- ¹⁴⁴ 'Englishmen and Frenchmen,' *BM* Aug. 1878, p. 235.
- ¹⁴⁵ 'Mme Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 499.
- ¹⁴⁶ 'Mme Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 500.
- ¹⁴⁷ 'Mme Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 503.
- ¹⁴⁸ 'Mme Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 490.
- ¹⁴⁹ *A Beleaguered City*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000.
- ¹⁵⁰ Superficially, the New Woman novels are often taken to mean novels representing sexually liberated women. Equally importantly, however, the New Woman novel was also concerned with motherhood; the best example is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915).

¹⁵¹ *The Marriage of Elinor*, London: Macmillan, 1892.

¹⁵² It is impossible to establish the sequence of the novel and the short stories: *The Marriage of Elinor* was published in 1892, however, no research has managed to establish the date for 'A Story of a Wedding Tour.' John Stock Clarke's comprehensive bibliography of Oliphant's fiction (*Margaret Oliphant, 1828-1897: a Bibliography*. St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1986) does not provide a date. The second short story, 'John' was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 1894.

¹⁵³ 'The Looker-On' *BM* Aug, 1894, p. 296.

¹⁵⁴ 'A Story of a Wedding Tour' is reprinted in *Nineteenth Century Stories by Women: An Anthology* ed. Glennis Stephenson, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts 1993. pp. 403-427. Page references are to this edition. 'John' was first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 1894, and subsequently reprinted in *A Widow's Tale*, London: Blackwood and Sons, 1898. References are to the edition in the volume.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hardy, 1912 Preface to *Jude the Obscure*. In *Jude the Obscure*, ed. by Norman Page. NY: Norton, 1978, p. 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

REPRESENTATIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

Mrs Severn was not a partisan of work for women, carrying out her theory, but a widow, with little children, working with the tools that came handiest for her daily bread. [...] Nobody ever dreamt of thinking she was going out of her proper place, or taking illegitimate work upon her when she took up poor Severn's palette.

Oliphant

In October 1856, George Eliot wrote an article called 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' for the radical *Westminster Review*. The article is devoted to the discussion of the current products of female authorship. She starts the article thus:

Silly novels by Lady Novelists are a genus with many species, determined by the particular quality of silliness that predominates in them – the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic.¹

She then continues her discussion with the particular kinds of female fiction which she condemns: the 'Mind-and Millinery' school, the 'Oracular novels,' the 'White-neck-cloth' novels, and the 'modern-antique' novels. She satirises the weaknesses and the embarrassingly low standards of each in great detail. By analysing the low quality of existing literature by women writers, as well as the current separate standards for assessing women's writing, Eliot clearly describes the kind of literature she did not wish to be associated with, and argues against opening the floodgates to bad books.

While Eliot's article has been read as a critique of female authorship in general, or, a critique of aesthetically inferior female authorship in particular (the one which fails to reach the standard of excellence represented by male authorship), it has invariably been read as a statement within the context of Eliot's thought and development as author.² Yet what is easy to miss when considering Eliot's views in isolation from her cultural environment is one more additional fact: not only women's literature but also the critical discussions of the subject had become common practice by the 1850s. As Eliot herself says towards the end of her article, '[h]appily, we are not dependent on argument to prove that Fiction is a department of literature in which women can, after their kind, fully equal men,' indicating that women have established themselves in the field of fiction and that women's writing has become socially accepted and widely practised. [162] Eliot's article was only one of the numerous publications discussing the burgeoning field of women's literature and authorship: 1857 saw the publication of Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. Women's professional writing was a subject of profound concern not only in fiction such as Charlotte Yonge's *Dynevor Terrace* (1857), but also periodical articles such as Lewes's articles in the *Westminster Review*.³ This analytical interest was also

preceded by other publications which centred upon female authors – it is enough to think of George Bethune's collection *The British Female Poets* (1848) and Frederick Rowton's *The Female Poets of Great Britain* (1848) – all suggesting that female authorship was at the forefront of cultural interest.⁴

'Buttons and hooks-and-eyes:' authorship in early journalism

It is an indication of Oliphant's awareness of her own participation in her profession and of the current trends of discussing women's literature that she also embarked upon an analysis of female authorship – in fact, her very first essay for *Blackwood's* addressed the question. Starting with Miss Mitford in 1854, her early writing discusses female literature in the widest sense: it includes society novelists like Mrs Marsh and Mrs Gore, authors who achieved canonical status later on like Charlotte Brontë, Geraldine Jewsbury, Mrs Craik, Charlotte Yonge, historians like Agnes Strickland, art historians like Anna Jameson, poets like Elisabeth Barrett Browning, and other, less well-known authors. By casting the net as wide as this, Oliphant in fact discussed the best known or certainly the most popular authors of her age, to whom she invariably referred as the 'feminine pen.' All these references to female writing demonstrate that female authorship was becoming common rather than exceptional, not only legitimate but emblematic: Oliphant proudly claimed that hers was 'distinctly the age of female novelists.'⁵

Female authorship was not only widespread and characteristic of the age, Oliphant suggested, but it was an eminently suitable and a very natural activity for the domestic woman. Her perception was rooted in her concept of the home as, in Cohen's words, the 'workshop of sociability' as well as the interpretation of writing as a social process, indistinguishable from other kinds of female labour.⁶ The natural affinity between the domestic woman and the trade of writing was made obvious in her essay in *Blackwood's Magazine* on Mary Russell Mitford's authorial practice.⁷ The material circumstances of domestic authorship are not very emphatic here, yet Miss Mitford's seamless fitting into her adoring family and the tender relations with her parents make the compatibility of domestic daughterhood with domesticated authorship clear. The same naturalness of the labour of writing characterises the

historian Agnes Strickland's authorship. She is represented as 'carrying her notes in her little bag or basket, like any *ordinary* womankind who has been buying buttons or hooks-and -eyes.' [*italics mine*]⁸ The compatibility of authorship with the definition of middle class femininity is further confirmed by the carefully chosen genres suiting the female author. Domestic fiction is not only suited to the self-educated female author because of the absence of a standardised way of novel-writing, but its material was also derived from the sphere which framed her life. Oliphant's discussion of Miss Mitford's career makes the connection between gender and genre obvious: Mitford's earlier, dramatic writing was a 'lofty and perilous experiment for a very young woman,' so were her experiments with 'the melody of tragic verse.'⁹ However, a turn to fiction was a perfectly suitable move for her, and the characteristic themes of the period in fiction – the 'kindly English villages and circles of good neighbours' as described in *Our Village*, and the gentle domestic idylls as described in *Belford Regis* – were genres in which she could particularly excel.¹⁰ The same compatibility of the female author and the society novel is demonstrated in her analysis of lady novelists such as Mrs Gore, the authoress of novels of 'conventional and artificial life,' and Mrs Marsh and other representatives of the contemporary recent literary tradition.¹¹ Historical biography, and especially the lives of female sovereigns, was similarly particularly suited to the female author, as Oliphant demonstrated. The large group of female authors discussing female sovereigns constituted an 'Amazonian cohort' while (the male) Dr Doran, writing on the same issues, was 'poaching upon someone else's manor.'¹² Writing historical biographies was similar to novelistic storytelling, for both satisfied the 'natural craving for story-telling.'¹³ Lastly, as Anna Jameson's example demonstrated, the nascent genre of art history counted as a particularly appropriate female genre, a genre suited to the feminine pen.

The schema above – that female authorship is fundamentally domestic, and female authorship is particularly strong in the area of domestic prose – allows the reader to draw the obvious conclusion: Oliphant represents authorship as a normal and natural activity for the domestic woman; it is within the range of the authority of the domestic woman. Yet, it does leave some questions unanswered: what is female

literature like? What claim can the literature produced by her have to literary authority? What claim to social authority can the woman writer have?

It is important to emphasise that the genre of fiction in which most female authors including Oliphant worked in the 1840s, had limited social prestige and authority. In the 1820s and 1830s, its cultural marginalisation was attributable to the pervasive influence of Utilitarians and Evangelicals, who rejected fiction and other products of imagination. For Utilitarians, 'it was a general [...] principle that imaginative literature, far from advancing men's affairs, distracted attention from their proper business.'¹⁴ Evangelicals considered fiction as distracting from the proper business of 'preening one's soul for heaven.'¹⁵ By the 1840s, the general cultural unease about fiction had somewhat subsided, partly due to Dickens's redefinition of fiction as a socially significant, moralistic enterprise. Yet, nevertheless, some lingering unease about fiction is made apparent in Oliphant's comment on readers of biographies who satisfy their general craving for storytelling by biographies because they 'deny themselves novels.'¹⁶

Considering the mixed reputation of fiction, Oliphant, the practising female novelist, could not interpret writing fiction as producing aesthetically significant artefacts; she needed to legitimize it by appealing to its impact upon the audience – this is what Altick calls the aesthetics of 'moral guidance.'¹⁷ For Oliphant, the mission of the novel is to inform the reader about the world. Novelists, therefore, were seen 'the Shakespeares of our day' and this excellence was secured on epistemological grounds. As she suggested, the novelist made 'investigation into the secret heart of our humanity.'¹⁸

Despite the naturalness of female writing, and despite the fact that female writing was publicly acknowledged, however, Oliphant voiced critical ambivalence about the quality of women's writing. To her, for female authors to strive for an authoritative position in literature was unnecessary. Despite the laudable prevalence of female authorship in society, Oliphant rejected the idea that the work produced by female authors could be *en par* with male-authored literature. Although, she argues, they 'have a natural right and claim to rank foremost in the second' class, she also emphasises that women 'rarely or never find their way to the loftiest class' in literature.¹⁹ Women's inferiority consisted of superficiality and triviality: of treating

the 'vexed questions of social morality, the grand problems of human experience [...] summarily.'²⁰ Women, who were thus given to 'sweeping judgements and wonderful theories,' were also limited in their ability to synthesise: they only saw 'a part' instead of the whole.²¹ In other words, female-authored literature appeared to be different in kind and in degree; and the reason for its inferiority resided in the fact that Oliphant defined good literature as one describing completeness, synthesis and in-depth analysis – according to qualities commonly associated with male-authored literature. Therefore, it is obvious that women's inherently different literature could not live up to this standard. In other words, Oliphant accepted and voiced the idea that the literature produced by women is inferior in aesthetic quality.

Despite the fact that Oliphant believed in the inherent second-rateness of women's literature, she already at that point implied that there was a more fundamental difference between male and female writing: the different ethical attitude of the female writer. This distinction between ethical attitudes is particularly marked in her simultaneous analysis of Anna Jameson's art history in comparison with Ruskin's one in her article 'Modern Light Literature – Art' (1855), and to some extent, in her article 'Modern Light Literature – History' (1855) where she compares Gibbon's historiography with that of Miss Strickland. The question here is not so much whether the male authors in question are the better historians – it is obvious that the 'more eminent' of the two *writers* upon art history is Ruskin, and that Ruskin is the 'leading authority' in architectural history.²² The main point is that there are fundamental differences between how male and female art historians interpret writing, knowledge, and the ultimate end of communicating it. For the male author, writing was a fundamentally self-absorbed and isolated enterprise, behind which the underlying impulse was self-expression: Gibbon wrote in the fashion of the gentleman scholar, 'in important and mystical seclusion;' and produced each work after 'a year or two of uninterrupted quiet and mysterious labour.'²³ Ruskin's self-absorption pertains to the ultimate end of his scholarship: for him, gathering information and learning served the purpose of self-perfection. This had inevitable consequences upon Ruskin's relationship to his audience. Ruskin assumes the essentially authoritative position of the interpreter of art work, resulting in a

condescension, a 'shrewish arrogance' towards the audience, and an essential lack of interest in 'the mysteries of art.'²⁴

Self-absorbed masculine attitudes are in sharp contrast with female concepts of authorship. Although Strickland, 'the literary woman of business' produces for a wider audience than Gibbon, yet the fundamental difference of her writing from his consists in the essentially communicative and social character of her authorship. As Oliphant suggests, Jameson

quietly sets about the benevolent business of making us as well acquainted as herself with her own particular field of art. Mrs Jameson is content to divest herself of her superiority, and give her audience an opportunity of judging with her, and her work is painstaking and laborious as well as elegant, and adds to our practical acquaintance with its subject. We have here no great critic to deal with, but an accomplished observer, and lover of art; and the subject and the period which this writer makes choice of, sends us back to consider pictures and paintings as grand instruments of an unlearned age for general popular instruction.²⁵

This analysis shows a surprising degree of similarity to twentieth century analysis. Cultural feminism has devoted much space to discussing fundamental differences between male and female attitudes to knowledge, and Oliphant's early representation of authorship already indicates that the more cooperative attitudes of female authors may establish a different paradigm of authorship. For the female author, literature is a social act – this is what cultural feminism would describe as an attitude of 'holding' as opposed to the masculine 'acquisitive' one.²⁶ This differentiation between literature as a social act and literature as an individualistic enterprise will be further discussed in relation to Oliphant's later analysis of female authorship.

'This shall be my trade:' Female authorship in early novels

The significance of the theme of female authorship for the young Oliphant is made even more obvious by the fact that two of her early novels foregrounded female authorship and explored the connection between female artistic endeavours and domesticity from various perspectives. Two fundamentally similar forms of art are emphasised in these texts: that of the 'feminine pen,' as well as female visual art. These details easily lend themselves to a biographical reading, considering that Oliphant the novelist was married to a stained glass designer, and their early life in

London saw them in the company of a number of minor authors and artists.²⁷ More important, though, the intrinsic suitability of these two art forms to her purposes as the material conditions of their pursuit are putatively domestic. Indeed, both of the art forms conform to what Virginia Woolf's materialist analysis identified: most female professions derive from female accomplishments.²⁸

The simultaneous representation of artistic practice in novels and in journalism raises an important point about the different generic requirements. These differing requirements of journalism and fiction are supposed to mould contents, or, as, Jameson's late twentieth century formulation puts it, genres are 'literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular artefact.'²⁹ Commonsense arguments would suggest that Oliphant's representations of authorship are more radical in novels and less so in journalism, because novels are 'freer' genres, 'less mediated' and influenced by the demands of the marketplace or the audience. At the same time, the Victorian fiction market was under the control of Mudie's lending library, which 'was the chief bulk purchaser of novels, which meant that publishers had constantly to defer to library tastes,' making it very difficult to decide whether Mudie's market-driven control or Blackwood's corporate voices exercised more pressure upon the woman writer.³⁰ Nevertheless, as the comparison between the representation of female artists in the articles versus fiction suggests, Oliphant's journalism describes a wider variety of female writing subjects and their domestic writing circumstances are discussed in less detail. The heroines of the novels, on the other hand, are more embedded in the domestic setting, and are unequivocally the maiden daughters of their families who put their art to essentially familial service, and who conceive of their artistic practice as an essentially familial act.

Her first novel published by *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Quiet Heart* (1853) already touches upon the themes discussed above: female authorship on one hand, and the world of published authorship on the other.³¹ Ostensibly, *The Quiet Heart* is a story of youthful love, broken heart and eventual reconciliation between Menie Laurie and her lover Randall Home, mostly set in the remote Dumfriesshire and therefore using motifs of exotic Scotland that were so lucrative for the fiction market in the 1850s. Yet at the same time, it analyses the natural artistic practice of the

female author, and it also explores the avenues for the public validation of female authorship.

The main female character of the novel, Menie, is a practitioner of visual arts, yet because of their material circumstances, Oliphant sees an essential similarity between this and writing: neither require institutional education, both can be developed from an existing feminine accomplishment, and both can be pursued in the domestic environment; therefore both are potentially natural activities for the female practitioner. Menie is often represented as engaged in 'fancy-work' to make the time pass as she is not needed in the keeping of the small, mother-daughter household [13], or alternatively, she is represented at drawing as a pastime. It is obvious, therefore, that Menie's subsequent turn to drawing as a trade is seen as a natural outcome of her previous domestic accomplishments, always pursued in the family parlour.

Not only her pursuit of art, but also the production of saleable commodity is represented in feminine terms. Menie's mother, the widow of limited means, is impoverished unexpectedly, and the financial survival of the little family comes under threat. For Menie, the option of marriage to her betrothed is an obvious avenue to secure economic survival, but this option is ruled out as soon as Menie discovers that because of her impoverishment, Randall resents her mother's presence. He follows the theory that 'if you get naething wi' your wife, [...] take care to see you're no cumbered wi' onybody but hersel.' [216] Menie, true to her moral code which dictates the primacy of filial ties over sexual attraction, is then forced to turn her otherwise natural accomplishment into remunerative labour. [86] Nevertheless, she happily and naturally takes on the remunerated profession of art, and proudly declares: 'I will make portraits [...] this shall be my trade.' [202] While one might argue that there is a tension between being 'forced' into selling by circumstances and happily undertaking it, it is important to recall Menie's mother's embarrassment about 'a bairn of mine doing work for money.' [251] This duality emphasises that female earning is different from male earning: for women, earning is not natural, but earning *in need* is so. Menie, therefore, is forced to this expedient.

While Menie's artistic work is always discussed in domestic terms and her work is always seen in a familial and social *context*, it is also important to note that

art does not endow Menie's with the social identity of the public artist in the marketplace, nor is she shown being involved in selling her product. Instead, Oliphant was interested in mapping out the potential social identities that a female author could assume. This exploration takes place through the representation of authorship as practised by two male characters, Menie's childhood playmate, Johnny Lithgow and Menie's childhood sweetheart, Randall Home, who personally participate in the public world of literature.

Johnny Lithgow is consistently represented as the male equivalent of Menie, both in terms of artistic practice and personal inclinations. Despite their vastly different class positions (hers is shabby gentility, while his is the background as a poor cottager's only son) they are both educational and cultural outsiders. Just as Menie turns her natural talent at fancy-work into remunerated profession, Johnny Lithgow turns his lowly, manual trade of the compositor into an artform, and becomes 'the rising critic [...] and writer of popular articles.'^[59] In both cases, their art is a transformation and subversion of an inferior, trade-like skill and both perceive the practice of art as intensive and even repetitive labour: Menie, works at her trade with 'great zeal and perseverance,'^[253] while Johnny practises his art 'like any other day's work.'^[121-2] Finally, they both perceive their art as an intersubjective tool which reinforces their existing affectionate ties as their motives behind selling their art reveals. Although financial ambition and rising in the world through honest labour would be perfectly compatible with masculine ethics – therefore, Johnny may volunteer to engage in remunerated labour whereas Menie needs to be forced into it – nevertheless, Johnny also intends his financial remuneration to further domestic ends. But, most importantly, for Johnny Lithgow, the public practice of literature remains a social act, just as production of it was a social act. Johnny's embracing of affective ties characterises his relations with his family.

The definition of authorship as a social process, (pursued in the home, which Cohen defines as 'the workshop of sociability;' and performed as a 'social service') becomes particularly pertinent when compared with the concept of authorship embraced by Randall Home, Menie's lover and Johnny's companion in storming the literary stronghold of London.³² Randall's social and educational background has

endowed him with the educational capital of the Dumfriesshire grammar school, and subsequently, he tries his luck in London. He publishes one novel, which achieves considerable success, and is waiting for the birth of the second one. Yet, his authorial practice is carefully distinguished from the authorial practice of the two other characters. His book is created by an isolated ascetic spirit; it is driven by author-centred inspiration and self-expression rather than by audience-centered reception. This misconceived, individualistic and fundamentally isolated activity is not only morally disagreeable, but is also unproductive: Randall's second book remains unwritten, deriving from his mistaken belief that art requires inspiration. This kind of isolated authorship is matched with cold-hearted insincerity; and family affections remain alien to him. Although there is no explicit connection between selfishness and genius or generosity and authorship as a social act, the association clearly repeats the similar ideas in Oliphant's journalism.

Menie's art remains in the private sphere, but Johnny's participation in the public world of authorship in London outlines a paradigm for the public practice of a social model of authorship, indicating a paradigm that female authors may assume. Johnny's further career as a journalist remains an essentially intersubjective practice, for his writing is not rooted in self-expression, but in the pragmatic uses of his writing. Finally the social success of his work portrays, in somewhat idyllic terms, Oliphant's rather optimistic vision about the fact that interpreting writing as a social act can bring popular and financial success. Randall's misconception of art causes him intellectual sterility, and he eventually drops out of the collective memory of the marketplace. In contrast, Lithgow's social attitude to writing not only allows him to produce prolifically, but also secures him social power and authority through his writing, which is made apparent in a scene describing Lithgow as the centre of attention and wielding literary power. [Chapter 23, pp. 277-285] In other words, the ethically correct authorial attitude is duly rewarded.

The Athelings or Three Gifts, another early novel, further elaborates the themes of the world of letters and authorial practice.³³ This novel has been discussed in Chapter Three from other perspectives, yet it is important to return to it as it provides one of the very few examples of the representation of female authorship in Oliphant's novels. In this novel, Oliphant reiterates the previously outlined ideas of

authorship as both a natural and social act, and its suitability to the domestic woman. What the novel questions, however, is the acceptance and responses to Agnes's domesticated authorship, and the limits of her literary authority.

Agnes Atheling, similarly to her creator, is a lower middle class author of domestic novels, whose writing takes place naturally, in a domestic environment. Writing is the spontaneous and unselfconscious exercise of a natural gift; it is a 'sweet spontaneous impulse' [vol.1. p.23], whose exercise delights the author. Agnes is characteristically represented in the family parlour, engaged in her writing, which 'alternated with all manner of domestic occupations.' [vol.1. p.24] The similarity of writing to dressmaking – another suitable enterprise for lower middle class girls of precarious financial standing – is emphasised by the fact that Agnes's mother seriously considers training her for that trade 'or some other practical occupation,' should she remain single and therefore in need of financial support. [vol.1. p. 23] Writing as a natural extension of domestic activities is fully endorsed by members of Agnes's family, and her book is happily read by all the family. The printed proof sheets are also corrected under domestic circumstances – under familial approval. 'They were proud of her at home.' [vol.1. p.23]

Yet writing as a domestically performed, essentially private activity is sharply distinguished from the female author's participation in the world of literature, either in terms of her personal circulation, or, in terms of 'marketing' herself. The peril of 'sexualised self-exposure' is a perfectly legitimate one for Agnes, as was demonstrated through the public exposure of Rachel, the orphaned singer in Chapter Three. Agnes's published authorship, therefore, has to be fully domesticated or at least saved from the embarrassing implications of this kind of exposure. This particular salvation is partly achieved by the prevailing practice of anonymous publishing and partly by the familial mediation of the business dealings between author and publisher. The remunerated aspects of authorship might also imply embarrassment, but the very fact of getting paid is less embarrassing for a lower middle class young woman. Yet, it is significant that for Agnes, the desire to achieve financial autonomy is in no way a motive for separation from the family: Agnes's earnings serve a fundamentally complementary source of the family income – in other words, even receiving remuneration for the work appears to be natural.

Yet, despite Eliot's implicit assertion of the commonplace nature of such a practice only one year previously, what this novel makes explicit is that female authorship – even in this unassuming and fundamentally private form, deriving from natural female domestic existence and competence – is seen as a threat by contemporary society. This is made apparent by two minor male characters who explicitly deny the female author any literary competence. Foggo S. Endicott, the American visiting journalist in Agnes's extended family is the contributor to the *Mississippi Gazette*. His art is assumed to be rooted in the romantic expression of the self, and his ultimate aim is to analyse himself and broadcast it through the medium of his writing. As he says, 'I don't approve of narrative poetry; it's after the time. My sonnets are experiences. I live them before I write them: that is the true secret of poetry in our enlightened days.' [vol.1. pp.107-108] This sort of authorship is sharply distinguished from Agnes's, and although he never openly criticises the heroine, it is obvious that his definition of good literature does not allow Agnes the role of literary producer. The sharpest critique of Agnes's authorship is pronounced by Lionel Rivers, the Oxford-educated clergyman and Agnes's suitor. Lionel Rivers, the Rector and lord-in-waiting, is probably the first of Oliphant's failed clergymen, who are dispositionally far too self-absorbed and lofty to be able to 'talk to the heart' in crucial situations of comfort. Here the emphasis lies on his fundamentally patriarchal attitude to female authorship, which denies the female author even the limited amount of cultural authority she may derive from her domestic one. The rector, whose intelligence and good will are undoubted, does not deny female intelligence *per se*. As he repeatedly suggests: 'Intelligence is the noblest gift of a woman [...] I admire, above all things understanding and intelligence. I can suppose no appreciation so quick and entire as a woman's.' [vol. 3. p.58] But his appreciation of intelligence does not extend to any endorsement of female creativity. For him, 'originality is neither to be wished nor looked for.' [vol. 3. p.247] In other words, he makes it obvious that intelligence and understanding are acceptable as long as they emphasise female subordination. Agnes answers submissively, yet she senses the irony of the situation as she listens to 'this haughty tone of dogmatism from the man who held no opinions.' [vol. 3. p.247] The lofty opinion of the Rector, obviously, does not hinder the flourishing of their love affair. The novel ends in the fashion of

the customary marriage-plot of the three-decker – leaving undisclosed whether the Rector learns to accept autonomous female creativity.

‘The Amazonian Cohort:’ authorship in later journalism

Authorship, writing and the changing field of literature became the focus of Oliphant’s journalism in the 1870s and 1880s. Her increasing corpus of literary critical articles allowed her to analyse the identity, the position and the literary practices of the female author, and even provide what we might call a tentative sketch of the theory of female literature. These two decades represent the bulk of Oliphant’s non-fiction. During this period, she occasionally contributed to different magazines such as *The Edinburgh Review*, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Good Words*. The bulk of her analysis of authorship is to be found on the pages of *Blackwood’s Magazine* and in two of her literary histories: the three-volume *Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (1882) and the two-volume *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892). Taken together, the essays published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* and the relevant sections of the literary histories allow the reader to explore Oliphant’s ideas on female authorship and her assumptions about gender and genre.

The bulk of the analysis of women’s literary history is to be found in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. From 1870 onwards, Oliphant contributed regular columns to the periodical: the series ‘New Books’ in the 1870s (1870-1879); another series on ‘Autobiographies’ in the early 1880s, and later in the decade, the series ‘Old Saloon’ (1887-1892) and, finally, a minor series called ‘Looker-On’ in six instalments in the 1890s. The specific character of these series is analysed in Chapter Five. Although there is no explicit intention of analysing female literature in a separate series of articles, female authorship is a recurrent subject in these reviews, which take their subject matter from literary biographies and memoirs of female authors. Oliphant analysed female authorship by examining the practice of a number of female authors of her present and the past: Austen, Mitford, Montagu, Mme de Montague, Madame Puliga (Mme de Sèvigné’s biographer), Eliot, Barbauld, and Mrs Somerville, Martineau, Anna Jameson and Fanny Kemble in the 1870s – either authors from

youth or authors taking the pen after a lifetime of other kinds of prominence. The trend is continued in the 1880s with the analysis of the authorial practice of different authors, ranging from early modern female authors such as the autobiographers Margaret, the Duchess of Newcastle, Lucy Hutchinson and Alice Thornton, the girondiste Madame Roland, to professional female authors including her friend Mary Howitt, Mrs Carlyle, Sarah Austin, Fanny Burney and Mrs. Trollope, Agnes Strickland, Austen, Alcott, and George Eliot, Harriet Beecher-Stowe, and a number of female travel writers. These analyses of female authorial practices enable her to formulate an incipient theory of female authorship. Her model of authorship does not locate writing in resistance, but in nature: it is rooted in the idea that female authorship is not an act of transgression, rather, that female authorship is a fundamentally suitable and natural activity for the (domestic) woman.³⁴ This theory is further complicated by the early nineteenth century redefinition of authorship as a wholly or potentially commercial activity. At the same time, Oliphant also tentatively explores the issue whether is a collective activity or rather an individualistic one. Her theory examines female authorship at the intersection of essentialism and historicism, allowing her to foreshadow modern theories of female authorship, and providing a simultaneously conservative and radical vision.

(Beginning to write)

Central to Oliphant's analysis of female authorship is an assumption about a fundamental affinity between woman and the narrative: that the affinity between woman and storytelling provides the impulse for female authorship – that women are 'talkers unrivalled'³⁵ and that even Eve entertained Abel and Cain with her frequent storytelling.³⁶ Yet the very potential – the natural, psychological affinity between woman and the narrative – requires some further assistance to become written literary practice, and this assistance is provided by the domestic encouragement of the middle class female author. As Oliphant invariably represents them, female authors across the centuries tend to be born into educated, aristocratic or middle-class, families. Families – not only mothers but also fathers – take pride in their

precocious daughters and support their writing activity, thus making clear that writing fits daughterly responsibility rather than replaces it.

The paradigm is firmly established during the analysis of the earlier female authors, such as Margaret Cavendish the Duchess of Newcastle, Alice Thornton and Lucy Hutchinson, whose writing career she analysed in her series on 'Autobiographies' in 1881 and 1882 in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Margaret Duchess of Newcastle was raised by her supportive family, especially by her mother, while Lucy Hutchinson, although living in the seventeenth century which is supposed to discourage female advancement, was distinguished by her learning, which originated from her domestic environment.³⁷ Their near-contemporary Lady Mary Wortley Montagu whose career Oliphant analysed in an entire article in 1868, was adored by her father, while the *girondiste* Mme Roland, the subject of another lengthy article in her series on autobiographers in 1883, was raised by a predominantly female domestic community, encouraging serious studies and domestic reading.³⁸ Other eighteenth and nineteenth century female authors whose authorial practice Oliphant analysed followed the same path. Miss Burney was connected with the world of learning through her father, and her childhood is represented as full of fine company and fine music.³⁹ Middle class women, such as Austen and Mitford, are represented as beloved daughters of educated affective families, and despite the inherent aesthetic differences between their writing, the same loving childhood is shown to have shaped their authorial identities. They were both 'well born and well connected, with a modest position which not even poverty could seriously affect,' and from their childhood they were accustomed to 'meeting people of some distinction and eminence.'⁴⁰ Family for both of them provides ground for 'cultivation and refinement' no matter, whether family meant a closer unit (Mitford) or a larger one (Austen).⁴¹ The childhood of the Strickland sisters was sweetened by self-initiated, unhindered reading of Shakespeare and by amateur theatricals and poetry.⁴² The strength of Oliphant's conviction is also demonstrated by a fact that even Mary Howitt's childhood, repressed and silenced according to the diktats of Quaker ethics, was coloured by the voice of the singing mother.⁴³ Reading and intellectual accomplishment, therefore, are not represented as being achieved in opposition to parental oppression. The entire female literary tradition is characterised by its

fundamentally domestic origins: the female author's affinity with the narrative is natural and she gains encouragement by her upbringing and domestic traditions, irrespective of her own historical period.

The commitment to the compatibility of filial domestic duty and female authorship is represented nowhere more clearly than in Oliphant's review of Martineau's autobiography in her essay 'Harriet Martineau' in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1877.⁴⁴ While Martineau was keen to derive her authorial success from her own heroic defiance of parental negligence and indifference in her *Autobiography*, Oliphant disproved her by highlighting the support she received from her brother James who invited her to 'devote' herself to writing instead of plain sewing.⁴⁵ The scientist Mrs Somerville's example seems to be a little more difficult to accommodate: she received no support for her scientific pursuit, as her childhood was 'bookless, companionless, untaught,' while her father, who was 'troubled by his prodigy,' feared that the all serious self-teaching in which Mary engages will threaten her mental health.⁴⁶ Her fate did not improve when she married her intellectual inferior, yet her widowhood and her second marriage (of which Oliphant approves, despite her general dislike of second marriages) to her second cousin Dr Somerville secured the domestic support deemed to be essential for the prominent woman's intellectual self-fulfilment. Fanny Kemble, the actress, on the other hand, gained not only domestic encouragement for her acting, but was persuaded to pursue it despite her own reservations.⁴⁷

(Turning to genres)

Domestic existence is not only psychologically supportive for the talented girl, but also supports her authorship by providing the material of domestic life, which then is naturally shaped into texts of appropriate genres. Yet Oliphant was a sufficiently sensitive literary historian to understand the different generic preferences of different historical periods: for the earlier authors, genres like autobiography, family history and letters appear the natural genres, while for the later ones, the natural genre is the domestic novel. This historical shift is apparent in Oliphant's comments on two of the few early women writers in her series 'Autobiographies' in

1882. Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, though she distinguished herself by writing in other genres as well, is only praised for her autobiographical act. As Oliphant suggests, nothing else she wrote 'has lasted but the delightful study of herself and history of her husband.'⁴⁸ Lucy Hutchinson – the Duchess's contemporary from the time of the Commonwealth – is similarly described as the compiler of family history, which was 'a fancy of the time.'⁴⁹ The observation that the earlier female author excels in 'non-fictional' genres is carried on into the eighteenth century, as is apparent in her discussion of the ladies of the French *ancien régime*; who all write in genres – memoirs and letters – that their own domestic life experience supports. Mme de Sévigné's letters, examples of 'the easiest, delightfulest, most brilliant and spontaneous writing' take their subject matter from the experience of the commonplace.⁵⁰ These letters are 'the record of marriages and deaths, of Court quarrels and reconciliations.'⁵¹ Mme de Puliga – the authoress of the *ancien régime* book on Sévigné – also uses topics that represent familiarity: her province is a 'little genealogy and family history' which she writes in the same way her contemporaries 'embroidered, with a quiet refinement and high-bred humbleness.'⁵² Mme de Montague and Mme Roland, the two persecuted ladies of the French revolution, write memoirs which share the same personal character.

Nineteenth-century female authors, such as Jane Austen, add products of the imagination – domestic novels – to their repertoire. To Austen, the very circumstance of domestic existence provides the subject matter. Her novels are 'the natural result of the constant, though probably quite unconscious, observation in which a young woman, with no active pursuit to occupy her, spends, without knowing it, so much of her time and youth.'⁵³ Sara Coleridge's activity of translating and editing her father's work and Anna Letitia Barbauld's children's books and poetry also add to the list of those fitting genres in which female authors can excel. Somerville's area of excellence – mathematics and physical science – has less feminine connotations in our century than novels, yet they were areas 'in which ideas about gender were not obviously woven into the fabric of the subject matter itself,' and if perhaps the subject matter was not that domestic, it is also clear that domestically pursued self-training was a certain avenue to it.⁵⁴

(Educating the female author)

Oliphant's views on education need to be examined in the context of the female author's cultural and literary authority. Education was an obvious aspect of the examination of female authors' lives, but it also gained particular currency in the 1870s and 1880s. That was the period of the expansion of educational opportunities for women in Britain, best exemplified by opening high standard institutions of secondary education and by opening up higher education institutions for women.⁵⁵ For Oliphant's own generation, and for most female authors she reviewed, these changes were hardly relevant to their lives.

According to the testimony of her *Autobiography* and subsequent biographical research, Oliphant received no formal education, and was probably educated at home by her mother 'whose reading habits were eclectic.'⁵⁶ Yet her own precociousness and early reading achievement are attested to by her strongly autobiographical article on the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, where she comments on the admiration her own childhood precocity and 'proficiency in letters' gained during a trip on the Union Canal between Edinburgh and Glasgow.⁵⁷ This sort of spontaneous, pre-institutionalised learning was common among female authors in the first half of nineteenth century, of whom very few received education outside the home, and, if they did, it was usually restricted to learning accomplishments mostly irrelevant to the skills and knowledge required for writing books.⁵⁸ Domestic education was the norm for the Victorian female author, and they often received it from mothers and governesses or from brothers' tutors.

Yet domestically acquired education offered hidden advantages, as Oliphant's personal example shows: it trained the future author for self-education. Oliphant derived her authorship and expertise in literary and cultural criticism from her early habit of spontaneous and non-institutionalised learning, which opened up avenues for later self-training. Her relationship with the publishing firm Blackwood from the 1850s onwards provided the necessary framework for her further self-education, and her encounter with foreign languages also derived from autodidacticism. Unlike some of her sister authors, Oliphant was untrained in languages, yet it was a

commission received from Blackwood to translate Montalambert's *The Monks of the West* in the early 1860s that forced her to teach herself French, and after the initial failure – she was obliged to get a French tutor to improve her command – her success was later to be widely acknowledged.⁵⁹ Familiarity with French had specific significance for a female novelist, for it was the language par excellence for fiction, and her knowledge of French enabled her to review French literature extensively.

Personal experience and observation helped Oliphant to formulate a theory of the proper education for the female author. Knowledge is very much a question of good habits learnt early and a good library – a model which is just as easily applicable to the self made man, as her frequent analyses of the life of different self-made men shows.⁶⁰ Her analysis of Mitford's career in 1855 explains that domestically acquired, spontaneous and non-institutionalised education, and independent reading are what enable the female author to pursue her trade, while boarding school education is beneficial only if it does not inhibit self-training through books.⁶¹ Independent rather than institutionalised learning is what motivates Agnes Strickland.⁶²

These ideas gain further elaboration during the 1870s and 1880s in her articles analysing the achievement of female authors. Already the pre-1800 female autobiographers, such as the Duchess of Newcastle benefited from individually acquired education. The precocity of childhood and the familial endorsement of it is also appreciated in the case of Mme Roland: not only was she taught Latin by her uncle, a young priest, but she claims to have spent her childhood in a 'rage of learning.'⁶³ Fanny Burney is also connected 'with a higher world of intellect and literature by means of her father.'⁶⁴ Learning is domestic and incidental in the case of the Strickland sisters, whom their father wanted to turn into mathematicians, only to be persuaded by Agnes's assertion that reading Shakespeare was her true vocation.⁶⁵ Sara Coleridge's non-institutional education was supported by her father and paternal friend, Southey.⁶⁶ It is only Martineau's career that slightly diverges from this pattern, for Martineau's parents 'pinched themselves in luxuries to provide their girls as well as their boys with masters and schooling,' yet Martineau's education without the benefits of self-training would have been in no way satisfactory.⁶⁷

The process of spontaneous and non-institutionalised learning also implies that domestic science is not the polar opposite of academic advancement. The natural combination of the two is well demonstrated by the analysis of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's career who successfully combined the translation of Epictetus with domestic duty.⁶⁸ Mrs Makin's boarding school is praised for the same purposes: for the 'bold and sincere simplicity' with which this establishment a hundred years before combined Greek and Hebrew tongues with Preserving and Cookery.⁶⁹ Similarly, as she proudly quotes from Mme Roland's autobiography, it was the 'mixture of grave studies' and the art of omlette making that fortified her for future trials.⁷⁰

Oliphant's emphasis upon the possibilities and advantages of domestically based education and self-teaching gains a particular significance in the 1870s. The issue at stake was no longer whether the female author could be properly taught by self-teaching, rather, how the self-taught female author could maintain her cultural authority in the face of institutionalised education, which gained increasing significance with the establishment of ladies' colleges. Oliphant consistently maintained an ironical distance from the requirements of these colleges. Her most important reservations stemmed from an essentially political understanding of female education.⁷¹ As she feared, these colleges would represent intellectual accomplishment as the sole property of *institutionalised* education. Therefore, when commenting on Martineau's education, she points out that not only did she learn Latin, but also that teaching girls Latin was 'as old as English society in its best development.'⁷² But, more generally, she feared that the spread of the new-fangled educational structures would devalue the slightly different content of previous educational theories and also earlier female author's achievement. This is apparent in her comment on Mitford's and Austen's achievement:

They were both well-educated, according to the requirements of their day, though the chances are that neither could have passed her examinations for entrance into any ladies' college, or had the remotest chance with the University Inspectors... women full of cultivation and refinement have existed for generations before ladies' colleges were thought of, notwithstanding the universal condemnation bestowed upon our old-fashioned canons of feminine instruction.⁷³

(The text in society)

It is obvious, therefore, that the natural female proclivity for storytelling, reinforced by the diverse blessings of domestic existence, and the available self-training (combined with personal fortitude) make authorship a fundamentally suitable and natural activity for a woman. Yet, authorship does not end with writing: it also requires publicity, and the very meaning and circumstances of publicity represent a major difference between the activities of earlier and later authors. This difference, however, is not the difference between earlier private versus the later public writing, rather it is the difference between writing for the general public as opposed to writing for the new, commercialised marketplace.⁷⁴

Indeed, the public nature of every kind of writing was an unquestionable verity for Oliphant, as she consistently asserted the pragmatic end of writing. This might not be obvious in those cases when the author's primary agenda appears to be consolation or obliteration of suffering and loneliness such as for Lucy Hutchinson, the autobiographer from the time of the Commonwealth. Hutchinson wrote her memoirs '[i]n the leisure of widowhood and age, when her children were out in the world and her noonday over,'⁷⁵ while Mme de Sévigné's letters were a tool 'by which she conquered dullness and loneliness and depression.'⁷⁶ Yet even when writing serves the purpose of personal consolation, for Oliphant, it cannot be the only impulse behind it: writing, even in those cases, is an audience-directed act. The audience is always present for the early memoir writers: Lucy Hutchinson writes for her sons and daughters to tell them her own and her husband's life story, while Mme Sévigné addresses her lively and wonderful letters to her daughter.⁷⁷ Other authors address a wider audience when vindicating the subject's character in public: they use writing for communication and persuasion. This intention exposes the inherent objective of these writings: that although they were not meant for the Victorian kind of commercial circulation, nevertheless, all writing was intended for some kind of circulation. As Oliphant understands, authorship is a social act and an audience-oriented project even for the earliest authors.

(Writing for the marketplace)

The paradigm established by Oliphant, therefore, is fairly straightforward: both early modern and nineteenth-century female authors appear to have been encouraged by the same material and intellectual circumstances, and their natural writing is further reinforced by the availability of the appropriate genres. Yet, as she notices, the very meaning of publication changes around 1800, when literature gains a distinctly commercial potential, and from that moment, the female author is faced with the decision between either not publishing, or publishing and therefore entering the world of commerce by producing a remunerated commodity.

This fundamental change in literature and authorship is analysed by Oliphant in one of her most interesting essays, 'Two Ladies,' which discusses the comparative careers of Fanny Kemble and Anna Jameson, published in *Blackwood's* in 1879.⁷⁸ The essay also provides a comparative analysis of Walter Scott's and Anna Jameson's authorship, where the two authors are juxtaposed because of their different responses to the historical transition from the system of patronage to the characteristically nineteenth century definition of published authorship as a commercialised activity. In this comparison, Jameson enacts the mode of authorship preceding the commercialisation of literature.⁷⁹ Although a contemporary of Scott and therefore sharing his possibilities, she self-consciously rejects the participation in the marketplace. That she produces at a leisurely pace ('[s]he says indeed again and again, that nothing would induce her to bind herself to a certain time of publication.') however, has consequences.⁸⁰ Aesthetically, it is certainly advantageous, suggests Oliphant, because she was never forced into producing 'ignoble or imperfect work.'⁸¹ Yet, at the same time, Jameson 'had learned a lesson'⁸² about the price of her freedom: she deprived herself of money and social independence. Her situation, therefore, is very reminiscent of the patronage-model of authorship:

The author in earlier days, was very well content to be the attendant star of some noble or wealthy house, getting society and its privileges upon a footing which was not exactly that of inferiority, often indeed that of flattered elevation and nominal sovereignty – but never upon an equal footing.⁸³

On the other hand, Scott is enlisted as a paradigmatic representative of modern, commodified authorship – the author who deliberately participates in the

marketplace of literature. This does not allow him any freedom from the booksellers, and also forces him to rush into quick publication, resulting 'floods of hurrying books one on the heels of another, and general slipshod work.'⁸⁴ Yet, he happily embraces his dependence from the booksellers, simply because he knows that by producing for the marketplace, he can secure himself an identity as a man of letters and a degree of social independence. Scott, therefore, 'was the first great writer who was determined to be socially independent – to be the host and not the guest, to give and not to receive.'⁸⁵

In other words, Scott becomes the first commodified author in English literature, with all the advantages and disadvantages of his position.⁸⁶ Oliphant's evaluation between the two different relationships between author and money coincides with Louis Menand's description of the effects of the professionalisation of the literary marketplace upon authors: entering into the marketplace as a participant simultaneously binds and emancipates the artist.⁸⁷ As Oliphant is keen to clarify, there is no 'good choice' to be made, each choice is both liberatory and binding at the same time.

What consequences did the commercialisation of authorship have upon the female author? Theoretically, it is obvious that the main advantage of the newly commercialised system is this: literature becomes a profession, which raises the possibility of establishing a social identity for the author; the author may become 'author by profession.' It is a factor in what Menand would call the 'movement toward a democratic social system.'⁸⁸ Yet this change – the possibility of creating a social identity – for the Victorian female author is perhaps less than advantageous or immediately accessible.

Commercialisation also brings about a polarisation and bifurcation in the realm of female authorship. It means that the female author has to choose between either publishing or keeping her text private: if she chooses to publish, then she will inevitably be involved in the marketplace, while, if she keeps the text private, she will remain free from commercialisation, but her text will not reach the audience. For Oliphant, the potential commodification of authorship does not mean that domestic character of 'producing' writing cannot be maintained, rather, it means that the meaning of publication changes. After the early 1800s, the female author is forced to

make a choice between withdrawing from publication entirely and write in what one can call private or 'closet' genres of literature, or, alternatively, aim for publication while being aware of the fact that now publication is essentially commercial.

This bifurcation causes, therefore, some of Oliphant's nineteenth century writing subjects deliberately to opt out of publication altogether in order to avoid commercial publication. Some authors start to write for specifically private and personal uses, and they wish their letters to remain private. The unease about publication (for commercial gain) is most apparent in Oliphant's critique of the literary fashion of publishing the private correspondence posthumously, such as in the cases of Sara Coleridge, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the correspondence between Geraldine Jewsbury and her old friend Jane Welsh Carlyle in her discussions of female authors' memoirs in the 1870s in *Blackwood's Magazine*. While Sara Coleridge's private letters were simply not worthy of publication, the publication of Geraldine Jewsbury's letters to Jane Welsh Carlyle is a different matter.⁸⁹ These letters were supposed to be destroyed by both correspondents, but the fulfilment of the arrangement on Jewsbury's part was prevented by her untimely death. The fact that the letters were published in the 1890s in the full knowledge of this arrangement was an 'offence.'⁹⁰

Other authors, however, happily associated themselves with participating in the marketplace and they deliberately wrote for commercialised purposes. Mary Howitt, Sarah Austen, Frances Trollope, Beecher Stowe and Alcott were all authors who deliberately produced for the marketplace. Oliphant represents writing for the marketplace and writing for commercial publication as natural to the female author. This concept, however, sits somewhat uneasily with the concept of separate spheres, and the idea that earning is a male responsibility. Yet for Oliphant, it is very important to underscore that selling the work is not natural for the female author for selfish, commercial gain in the way it would be natural for the male author. Rather, it is natural because participation in the marketplace and earning take place for the sake of domestic, affective interests. This distinction is made particularly sharp by the recurrent references to the character of drudgery of the work of the female author.

Female commercialised writing is always represented as drudgery, usually forced upon the author by external misfortunes, and commonly aggravated by

improvident male relatives. Mitford's misfortunes are picturesque: Mitford, who remains single all through her life, is forced by her thriftless father to be a 'literary drudge' and earn the family's keep by her pen.⁹¹ Barbauld's husband keeps school with her, and Barbauld becomes forced to literary drudgery by her husband's insanity, a condition which she 'supported and concealed.'⁹² Anna Jameson's remunerated labour in the service of her sisters, 'the bondage to the booksellers,' is a 'burden.'⁹³ Sarah Austin, the wife of a theoretician of jurisprudence of superb talents but lacking in the energy to revise his work for publication, leads a life full of 'activity and toil' while intensively translating Ranke's endless volumes to compensate for the lack of her husband's energies and determination.⁹⁴ Frances Trollope's work also appears natural because it is driven by female duty. In other words, all of these authors are *forced* into commercial production.

While the drudgery is forced upon the female author by male improvidence, nevertheless, they enter into the marketplace without complaint. Frances Trollope, married to a struggling and crotchety barrister, discovers her dormant talent at 50, and uses her literary ability for the 'redemption and support of her family' by producing an endless stream of cheerful domestic novels, while, simultaneously, nursing her son dying of tuberculosis.⁹⁵ Indeed, it is probably Frances Trollope whose example best summarises for Oliphant the fundamental similarity between 'normal' female labour and the work of the woman labouring in the marketplace:

It was, indeed, a commonplace for our mothers to do everything that women could do for their children, and whether it happened to be in the unseen labours of the domestic interior, or work of more conspicuous description, made probably little difference, ... the indomitable woman who was the sole support of all belonging to her, and never claimed, or, so far as is apparent, ever thought of any special credit in so doing.⁹⁶

The power of the paradigm – the hard-working female professional who probably would be *instinctively* writing (such as Mitford or Jameson) – but would not be forced to pursue literary drudgery was it not for male improvidence, is best shown by the way Oliphant uses it to explain the career of Wollstonecraft whose rationality she had greatly appreciated, as it was shown in Chapter Two.⁹⁷ Wollstonecraft is represented in the gallery of noble womanhood, who is 'in every way the support and guide of her family,' earning her own and her retainers' bread by literary drudgery. [248] In other words, Wollstonecraft is vindicated by her serious literary labour.

(Female Aesthetic)

Central to the establishment of the paradigm of female authorship for Oliphant is the description of female authorship in action: not only the personal (domestic) and cultural (female genre) origins of authorship, but its praxis and ethics. Therefore, Oliphant sets up a binary opposition between male and female models of authorship – models which are rooted in universal characteristics of sexual difference. At the same time, these models are not necessarily inextricably bound to the natural sex of the author, rather, they are paradigms which authors of either sex can assume.⁹⁸

Characteristically different, male and female attitudes to learning are distinguished by Oliphant as early as 1855, in an analysis of Anna Jameson's and Ruskin's different approaches to writing art history.⁹⁹ This article has been discussed above, yet it is worth recalling some of its observations. While not denying Ruskin's claim to excellence – that he should be 'considered among the foremost of our modern writers upon art' [704], and that he is a 'a great authority and influence in art,' – [708] Oliphant subjects Ruskin's attitude to a thoroughgoing critique, addressing the ethics of his relationship towards the subject of his scholarship and towards the audience of his work. His attitude to knowledge can best be termed as 'acquisitive:' for him acquiring knowledge is a self-fulfilling end. Oliphant's major objection is, though, addressed against what she sees as a masculine effort to establish a hierarchy between the author and the audience. As she points out, the 'more eminent writer tells us with a shrewish arrogance that he has studied the subject all his life and of course knows a great deal more about it, and is in a much better position to judge than we.' [708-9] The ethical shortcomings of this attitude become particularly striking when contrasted with Anna Jameson's different attitude to her audience who is 'content to divest herself of her superiority, and give her audience an opportunity of judging with her;' who is prepared to share knowledge.

100

After the initial insightful analysis of one male and one female author embodying different attitudes of authorship, Oliphant returned to the analysis of male

and female models of authorship in the 1870s in a number of instances. This may be the consequence of her extensive reviewing of biographies, yet, perhaps equally important is the fact that the 1870s witnessed the literary historical changes that reinforced the perceived inherent differences between male and female authorial practices. What Oliphant earlier perceived as a lofty, self-centred and unproductive kind of authorship, now gained a new lease of life by the rise of the professional gentleman, 'the cultured gentleman' who Oliphant saw as the embodiment of the masculine proclivity of finding perfection in isolation. The range male authors whose authorial practices Oliphant analysed during the 1870s and 1880s and 1890s extended over a rather odd list: the seventeenth century Huguenot scholar Casaubon; Mill, Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold of the mid-Victorians, and J. A. Symonds, and Pater of the late Victorians. Their differences are more striking than their similarities. They wrote on different subjects and their positions in crucial cultural debates were also diametrically opposed – it is enough to recall Mill's and Ruskin's opposed views on the woman's nature and their ideal social position in the mid-sixties, and the difference between Mill's characteristically mid-Victorian view upon the fundamentally social and moral end of literary and art criticism and the aestheticism advocated by Pater.¹⁰¹ Despite their vastly differing intellectual positions, however, Oliphant tended to see these critics as sharing male cultural and critical authority: they all practised literary and art criticism in respectable periodicals in the 1870s and 1880s. Criticism was a highly appreciated genre by Oliphant, which she considered a 'worthy and noble art.'¹⁰² Yet, as she perceived, these authors embodied a model of authorship which emphasised that authorship is a solitary and isolated enterprise and which interpreted writing as introspection.

Central to Oliphant's evaluation of authorial attitudes is the degree to which an author is prepared to engage with 'the external world.' As she sees it the masculine author assumes an essentially mistaken attitude to his audience an – attitude which is mistaken because it equals the explicit denial of the intersubjective nature of authorship.

Isolation is exposed as the central characteristic of masculine models of authorship in Oliphant's texts; and isolation is put forward in different aspects. One context is pure, physical isolation as the ostensible pre-requisite of male labour. The

characteristic venue of masculine scholarship is the isolated library where the male author can seclude himself in a magisterial way. The association of male intellectual activity with isolation is a recurrent theme in Oliphant's fiction: Rev. St. John in *The Curate in Charge* withdraws into his library and buries his head in the metaphoric sand to keep himself out of the domestic financial trouble caused by himself. The masculine, isolated library is also recurrent venue in her stories of the supernatural such as 'The Library Window' and *A Beleaguered City*. In a literary historical context the best exposure of physical isolation is provided in her analysis of Mary Mitford's career, which is shown against the background of her father's inactivity. In the essay on Mitford and Austen, published in March 1870 in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Oliphant compared Dr Mitford's intellectual labour with that of his daughter at length. While Mary Mitford performs her anxious, harrassed literary drudgery in the drawing room, Dr Mitford lives contentedly 'in the sanctuary of his study,' where his occupation is never revealed, but probably amounts to little.¹⁰³ The lack of productivity and isolation are even more striking when they are used in a metaphorical sense, such as in the case of Casaubon, the seventeenth century Dutch scholar, the real life origin of George Eliot's Casaubon. His career attracted Oliphant's attention in an essay in May, 1875, also published in the 'New Books' series. Casaubon's endless learning, the production of endless series of notes and volumes is as dry, arid, self-centered, and isolated in an abstract sense as Dr Mitford's life is in a physical one. His physical characteristics – 'stooping frame and inward-gazing eyes' – already indicate that he works 'in the learned gloom of his library,' and despite the production of endless tomes, his learning is unproductive as it does not have any reference to the outside world.¹⁰⁴ His learning is inextricably associated with self-absorption and selfishness. As Oliphant suggests,

the mere acquiring of knowledge for no particular purpose, the pursuit of reading, for the information of one's own individual mind, without any immediate reference to the world or other minds, is not an expansive or morally improving process. A man whose warmest wish is to be left alone, to get rid of the interruption of friendly visits and social intercourse, and who shuts himself up with his books must be liable more or less to the imputations of selfishness.' [617]

A similar critique is addressed to the literary labour of Wordsworth and Goethe, whose careers Oliphant discussed in 1871 in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Wordsworth and Goethe were obviously productive, but they embody isolation and romantic self-

absorption. Not only do they mistakenly believe in 'isolation as a means of perfection',¹⁰⁵ but the ultimate object of their existence is essentially mistaken: 'they are both bent, as upon the greatest of all earthly objects, upon the accomplishment of their own individual career.'¹⁰⁶ This objective is fundamentally mistaken because it is essentially self-centered:

They are both intent upon themselves, to each the centre of the world, and in a manner its *raison d'être*, is himself; they are lonely as Lucifer among the crowds of lesser creatures that fill the earth – working out each for himself the great mournful problem, burdened by a weight of greatness which neither in heaven nor earth is there one soul to share.¹⁰⁷ [italics in the original]

The isolated authorial practice of the male scholar and male poet is only part of the problem of what can be termed as masculine authorial attitude. Even more problematic is the hierarchical relationship between the male author and his subject: male authors tend to control the subject, being driven by the desire to absorb it rather than to engage with it and contemplate it. This essentially possessive attitude characterises the writing of Pater on whose *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* she comments in the 'New Books' series in November 1873. As she explains, the concept of 'aesthetic critic' already presents difficulties to her, but it is worth citing her major objections:

Mr Pater sets the "aesthetic critic" at once before us, in full possession of his high office, standing, as it were, a mediator between art and the world. "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality in life or in a book, to *me*?" he asks. "What effect does it really produce upon me? [...] How is my nature modified by its presence or under its influence?" Thus it is in furtherance of the grand pursuit of self-culture that he writes, treating all the great art and artists in the past, and all the centuries of men, as chiefly important and attractive in their relations to that Me who is the centre of that *dilettante's* world.¹⁰⁸ [italics in the original]

Conceiving of the self as fundamentally isolated and of self-perfection as only achievable through isolation perhaps not surprisingly leads to a misconceived relationship with the subject of knowledge. But Oliphant's greatest objection to male attitudes to scholarship is the aspect that pertains to the audience. She feels masculine paradigms of scholarship tend to misconstrue the relationship to the reader: they tend to see the critic or the scholar as having a fundamentally superior position, and they fail to respect the audience as independently interested in the acquired knowledge. Partly, these attitudes stem from the entire ignorance of the

audience, and partly, they derive from the authors' simple condescension to it. Matthew Arnold appears to have made this mistake on various occasions. In 1870, she accuses Arnold of the 'perpetual certainty of being always right,'¹⁰⁹ and elsewhere, she accuses him of excessive self-adoration.¹¹⁰ But Ruskin and Pater are accused of the same kind of attitude. Ruskin's delightful self-centeredness already attracted her attention in 1868 when she discussed his volume *Time and Tide* in the periodical, but as late as 1892 she returned to the discussion of his attitude, commenting on the fact that Ruskin has filled the world about himself with his writing.¹¹¹ Self-centeredness, therefore, is the cornerstone of these attitudes.

As has been emphasised before, masculine and feminine attitudes to learning do not necessarily impinge upon a rigid gendered distinction in Oliphant's vision. George Eliot and Harriet Martineau embody what Mellor terms as 'ideological cross-dressing:' the assumption of authorial attitudes that pertain to the opposite sex.¹¹² Oliphant analysed Martineau's career in an entire essay in *Blackwood's* in 1877 *à propos* the publication of Martineau's *Autobiography*, and she briefly commented on Eliot's career on various occasions, and most importantly, at length in *The Edinburgh Review*, on the publication of John Cross's hagiographic biography of her (1885). In her lengthy analysis of Martineau's self-representation, Oliphant, although largely sympathetic to her 'talent and industry' and 'courage,' found ample opportunity to criticise the general thrust of Martineau's practice.¹¹³ Her criticism was fundamentally twofold: she disliked the way Martineau embraced the paradigm of the solitary heroine who became an author in defiance of her family – a model that was arguably responsible for Martineau's ungenerous representation of her mother. The dislike of solitary heroism led Oliphant to the more detailed analysis of Martineau's career, which she saw as displaying self-importance, heroism, undue importance attached to her direct and prophetic social say, and the excessive preoccupation with posterity's view of herself. In other words, as she sarcastically commented, Martineau 'was a very sensible woman; yet not very much of a woman at all, notwithstanding her innocent and honest love of Berlin wool,' suggesting that the assumption of feminine externals does not atone for the representation of the self in a masculine way. [496]

George Eliot's authorial attitude is similarly associated with masculinity – this fact perhaps explains why Oliphant who was so keen on appreciating talent (as is evidenced by her appreciation of Hardy's talent, despite her dislike for *Tess*) wrote so surprisingly little about her most famous female contemporary. Except for a detailed comparison of Sand's *Consuelo* and Eliot's *Romola* in an article 'Two cities-Two Books' in 1874 in *Blackwood's*, and for a review of John Cross's biography of her in 1885, Oliphant did not discuss Eliot's art in detail.¹¹⁴

The essay written in 1874 is particularly interesting. Many critics of Eliot have considered *Romola* intensely self-representational, and it appears that Oliphant was one of the first critics to do so. The heroine is consistently associated with masculinity. Her attitude is altogether 'separated from ordinary life' – she is 'raised upon a pedestal of seclusion, learning, and ignorance, knowing nothing, as is so often the case, of the world which she disdains.'¹¹⁵ The key-term 'separation from ordinary life' obviously recalls the characterisation of authorship and learning appropriate for a male scholar. Not only the heroine, but George Eliot herself appears under the sign of male authorship. It was not the question of the masculine genre or the masculine externals that produce 'cross-dressing;' in Martineau's case, the choice of political economy in itself did not make her a masculine author, and Eliot's 'wrong' authorship is not the direct result of her more than 'feminine capacity for philosophy and big words.'¹¹⁶ Rather, it is the intrinsic quality of Eliot's work as well as her authorial and representational practices that associate her with masculine authorship, and this aspect is analysed in her second article. Already her early personal letters, which are the basis of John Cross's biography, demonstrate the complete absence of cardinal virtues such as 'sympathy and human fellowship' – the concepts that would characterise Somerville and Anna Jameson.¹¹⁷ Rather, she is described as a

woman oppressed by a sense of duty, and by the necessity of setting an example, putting down the right sort of thing in her diaries, and writing her letters with a determination not to be trivial or descend from the altitude of thought which was expected from her.¹¹⁸

These early personal attitudes, pervasive in her personal letters, nearly inevitably give way to an embracing of authorship so much more characteristic of male than female authors. Eliot, as Oliphant perceives her, constructs her authorial subjectivity in isolation from common humanity on one hand, and on the other, uses this authorship to put herself in the elevated position of the dissociated moral lawgiver.

Eliot 'is a conscious priestess elevated high upon a tribune, to which the eyes of the world are reverently turned.'¹¹⁹ This attitude – fundamentally isolated from humanity, and constantly uttering magisterial wisdom – is not only a personal authorial attitude, but also an attitude to labour which is supported and nurtured by Lewes's reverential attitude:

The reverential circle that gathered round her in her own house, agape for every precious word that might fall from her mouth; the carefully regulated atmosphere into which nothing from the outer world, save the most delicate incense with just the flavour that suited her, was allowed to enter; the ever-watchful guardian who preserved her from any unnecessary contact, are curious accessories little habitual to the possessor of literary genius.¹²⁰

Oliphant finally offers the evaluation of the masculinity of Eliot's career in her *Autobiography*, whose relevant section was written on the inspiration of the John Cross biography. What underscores Oliphant's view of Eliot's in the *Autobiography* is precisely the difference between her life and Eliot's: while she sees her own life as characteristically following the normal shape of a woman's life, the famous reference to the 'mental greenhouse' in which Lewis placed Eliot, again reconfirms the sense that Eliot assumed an isolated, masculine type of authorship.¹²¹ This issue will also be discussed in Chapter Six.

After an extensive analysis of the shortcomings of male authorial attitudes, the question arises: how do these attitudes compare with female authorial attitudes? It is perhaps telling that it is more difficult to answer this question than to analyse the inherent imperfections of masculine models of authorship. This is partly rooted in the fact that any cogent theory of female aesthetic was still in its infancy in Oliphant's time, and, excepting the fundamentally psychoanalytical models of female authorship in common currency, they still are rare.¹²² At the same time, these absences lend particular value to Oliphant's sporadic efforts at analysing the link between female subjectivity and means of artistic communication. One of the differences between the two kinds of authorship is related to the material aspects of writing. Often, the female (type of) author does not see her authorship separated from more manual aspects of labour as has been shown in *The Quiet Heart* where Menie's authorship of paintings derived from a manual accomplishment just as spontaneously as writing derived for Johnny from the lowly trade of typesetting. In *The Athelings*, Agnes's authorship organically grew out of her domestic and manual accomplishments, and none of

these activities was pursued in physical isolation from the world. But again, it is important that male authors are just as capable of assuming female authorial identities. This is particularly evident in the example of Scott, Oliphant's ideal novelist, who is praised for embodying attitudes so different from the romantic genius.¹²³

The more substantial differences between male and female excellence, and male and female paradigms of the author's relationship to the audience can best be seen in the comparison between the autobiographical act performed by Mrs Somerville and John Stuart Mill, which she extensively analysed in an essay in the 'New Books' series in April, 1874. As Oliphant establishes, they are 'in direct opposition' to each other, and the difference between the way they reveal themselves to the world is 'fundamental – of kind, not of degree.'¹²⁴ The difference consists in the ways they represent their acknowledged superior mental qualities. The way Mill treats himself is a very characteristically masculine attitude:

[h]e treats himself from the beginning [...] as something of a wonder, a man occupying a different position from that of other men [...] This is done not ostentatiously, not with any of that simple enthusiasm of self-love and vanity which is sufficiently familiar to us in the self-revelations of the men of genius, but mildly and steadfastly, as a truth of higher order which it would not become no one to gainsay. This is the man's view of his own position.¹²⁵

Mrs Somerville, the scientist, however, treats her own immense intellectual superiority with modesty.

She is aware from the outset, and painfully aware, that she not as others; but the wonder in her transparent mind is not so much that she should be superior, as that others should not do the same as she. The man stands on his elevation, feeling its loftiness to his very heart, and concludes that it is the duty of one so highly elevated to keep himself as much as possible from contact with the base multitude below. The woman looks down smiling, from hers, and says, "Come up, it is nothing so very great; and how easy to climb, if you will but take a little trouble!"¹²⁶

Establishing this sort of difference between the two different attitudes to knowledge – the attitude of possessiveness versus the attitude of cooperation – suggests different female behaviour. The female author shows gentler attitudes towards the subject represented. This is explained in the discussion of Boswell's and Burney's different approach to Johnson. Boswell's representation of Johnson provides an 'all round in full perspective,' while Burney's representation of the same subject is more

forgiving: she represents him 'in his most amiable aspect: kind, genial, and fatherly.'¹²⁷

Therefore it is obvious that female and male attitudes to authorship are fundamentally different, and although Oliphant does not offer a fully formulated theory on the intersubjective and cooperative nature of the relationship between the female author and her audience and her general environment, nevertheless, her sporadic comments suggest that female authorship is laden with distinctive values. This becomes particularly clear if we consider Oliphant's view upon the primary function of literature. Oliphant was fully convinced that literature has a pragmatic function rather than an expressive one, or, as she put in one of her later essays in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 'fiction is what fiction does.'¹²⁸ This, of course, was not necessarily a far cry from common Victorian ideas on the moral mission or moralistic legitimization – the moral aesthetic – of the novel, yet, significantly, Oliphant was always ambivalent about those simplistic ideas that assumed that literature can serve as model for people's lives.¹²⁹ For her the social mission of the novel consisted in consolation. She praised Scott's novels because they properly fulfilled the most primary function of the novel, that of providing 'amusement and instruction and consolation.'¹³⁰ As she comments in an article in the 'Old Saloon' in 1890, 'there is no more noble function of the novel than this of making up for the involuntary exile of the sick-room.'¹³¹ Considering her vision of women and that the primary task of literature is consolation, this combination did not only enable female authorship but made the woman the author *par excellence*. As she provides her final verdict on the question in the article comparing Mill's self-representation with Somerville,

Here are, however, before us some books which would seem to prove that literature and intellect are less incompatible with the broader and simpler experiences of humanity than recent information would make us believe. These reconciling books, mediators, as it were, between outrageous Mind and affronted humanity, proceed from two classes somewhat despised in the present day – to wit, women and Frenchmen.
132

Yet for Oliphant, ever aware of social weight and social authority, these theoretical statements did not suffice. No more a believer in the inherently second class nature of female literature, then she moved on to examine the relative position of female authored literature in the field – an examination that yielded rather

saddening results. Although female-authored literature was common and widespread, the general social authority of female literature appeared very limited. The regret over the patriarchal condescension with which women's literature was treated became increasingly apparent in Oliphant's work in the 1880s. In her article discussing the *Autobiography* of the Duchess of Newcastle, she points out that women authors are considered 'fine amateurs superior to, and scarcely worthy of, the full honours of the literary profession.'¹³³ Despite her fundamental dislike for Harriet Martineau's authorial practice, she had sufficient amount of female solidarity and also of awareness of patriarchal practices to point out that Harriet Martineau was attacked by her contemporaries not only for being a political opponent but also for being a literary woman.¹³⁴ As Oliphant notes, female authors are always 'benevolently or contemptuously reminded of their sex,'¹³⁵ and their writing is often considered to be good for woman.

That, however, did not mean that female authored literature unconditionally deserved recognition and indeed this is pertinent in the way she critically comments on some of them, such as on Brontë who she criticises for her 'school-girl philosophy.'¹³⁶ Nevertheless, she felt that the female author was plagued by the same patriarchal undervaluation as female achievement in other fields. Obviously, the cultural status of female authored literature was not improved by the shifting priorities of the literary field, which began to sharpen the difference between high and low culture, and which also meant the gradual marginalisation of the genre of the novel in general, and the kind of action-packed novel in which female raconteurs excelled in particular. As Oliphant constantly complains, the novel is considered 'only a novel' amongst other works of literature endowed with higher cultural status.¹³⁷ Novel reading is deemed too trifling and frivolous; it is a holiday activity, and most people speak of it 'apologetically as an exception to their usual studies – as a trifle taken up, don't you know, when one has nothing better to do.'¹³⁸ But, apart from the gradually lowering cultural status of fiction, Oliphant was also aware that the public success of fiction is very often a derivative of authorial self-representation and self-portrayal in the marketplace of letters, and she was increasingly certain that the female attitude to authorship is less conducive to public success. As she summarises the public perception and success of masculine and feminine authorial

attitudes, it transpires her preference is the feminine one, although the masculine attitude one is more likely to secure popular success:

Let us add that the self-assumption is infinitely more imposing to the general mind, and that even on the individual who asserts himself thus loftily, the assertion has an influence which it would be difficult to exaggerate, and gives him a real sensation of greatness which the humbler soul can never receive from without. The other position, however, has its compensating advantages, and so has its charm to beholders; and so long as human nature remains as it is, the charm of simplicity, the absence of self-consciousness, will call forth sympathy more warm than the mere admiration.¹³⁹

Mrs Severn and Mr Sandford: authorship in later fiction

In the last section, I would like to comment on the representations of authorship in Oliphant's fiction in the last three decades of her life. It is unfortunate that despite her general prolixity and her extensive interest in female authorship in journalism, the subject remained entirely unhonoured in her later fiction. Instead, in two of her novels she depicted visual artist, whose art she considered 'more social' and therefore more suited to narrative representation. In all of these instances, the novels explore not only the concept of artistry as natural to the domestic woman, but they explore the public failure of authorship conceived as intersubjective project.

The most extensive treatment of the fortunes of the female artist in Oliphant's *oeuvre* is to be found in her novel *The Three Brothers* in 1870. Unfortunately, not even this novel provides a full analysis of female artistry. The fundamental structure of *The Three Brothers* is a particularly Victorian reworking of motifs well-known in folk tales – the three sons of a rich man are sent out into the wide world penniless to try their luck for seven years. The eldest son opts for building a railway in the New World, the youngest one goes off to India in the service of the empire, while Laurie, the middle one attempts to try his powers in the art world of London. It is his career in London that allows for the representation of the visual artists' world, and it also allows Oliphant to represent the career of the 'woman-painter' Mrs Severn.

Mrs Severn is the heroine of the middle section of the novels, and crucial to her representation is the way art is seen as natural to the domestic woman, following the patterns already shown in the articles, or somewhat even preceding them. Mrs

Severn, the widow of a mediocre artist, is in her mid-thirties, and uses her talent as a painter to support her children in Fitzroy Square, one of the artistic quarters in London. While Mrs Severn did not practise art commercially in her husband's life, she had her natural inclinations and 'pretty talent' which allowed her to take to her work naturally.

Nobody ever dreamt of thinking she was going out of her proper place, or taking illegitimate work upon her, when she took up poor Severn's palette. There are ways of doing a thing which people do not always consider when they are actuated by strong theoretical principles. The padrona took to her work quite quietly, as if she had been born to it; did not think it any hardship; worked her regular hours. [vol.1. p.253]

This natural inclination gains support from the informal yet thorough education that Mrs Severn successfully acquired from her husband earlier. As the narrator describes the past, '[b]ut wherever the poor fellow went, a pair of bright, observant eyes were always by his side, taking note of things.' [vol.1. p.254] It is somewhat unfortunate, however, that Mrs. Severn's art, in spite of the thorough informal training, does not live up to the necessary standard which is emphatically – and perhaps ironically – described as the 'masculine touch.' [vol. 1. p.254] The lack of professional training has obvious and perhaps inevitable consequences upon the quality of the work of the female artist. Mrs Severn's art was imperfect.

She was feeble in her anatomy, very irregular in respect to everything that was classical; but somehow, bits of life stole upon the forlorn canvases in Fitzroy Square under her hand. [...] Mrs Severn's drawing was not likely to get firmer when her teacher was gone. It was never very firm, we are bound to admit. [vol. 1. p. 254]

Not only is there natural affinity between the female author and her art, but painting is one of the artforms that can be pursued domestically, and this is very accurately reflected in the description of the typical house in the artists' quarter, with slightly separated but somewhat interlinking spaces. Her working genre – 'pretty groups of children' [vol. 1. p. 241] and 'pretty babies and tender little nursery scenes.' [vol. 1. p. 255] – also allows her art to be represented as natural to her. Moreover, there is one more element of her artistic practice that makes it particularly suitable for the domestic woman: that visual arts do not involve the display of the artist's body. As she characterises her art to her friend Welby, the older, successful painter and RA: 'Not so very well known [...] and then it is only my name, not me.' [vol. 3. p. 4] The female artist, therefore, performs a fundamentally natural activity

by pursuing her art under domestic circumstances. Yet, while it is not difficult for Oliphant to prove that *producing* artwork is natural for the female author (of paintings), the selling of it, again, has to be distinguished from naked business motives and masculine discourses of profit. Yet, having to produce for the marketplace is definitely unnatural for a married woman, and clearly she did not paint for the market in her husband's life. The enforced nature of labouring for money becomes even more apparent in a conversation with Miss Hadley, her children's governess, who proposes to her that she should train her teen-age daughter Alice for paid employment. As Miss Hadley suggests, 'My dear, you know I think all the girls should know how to work at something [...] when they have no fortunes.' [vol.1. p.269]. But Mrs Severn flatly refuses to do it for her sake: 'I can't train Alice to a trade. If necessity comes upon her, some work or other will drop into her hands.' [vol.1. p.269], and she goes on to declare that she would rather work her finger to the bone than allow her daughter to work, making it obvious that for her, work (for money) is associated with toil and drudgery and it is only the sense of female duty that can legitimise female participation in the market.

Therefore, while both the domestic manufacture of art and the selling of it for affective purposes are natural, there is one element of selling the product that resists naturalisation, exposing the faultline of the theory of art pursued naturally or intersubjectively. The question is how commercially successful the female author can be if she refuses to display herself in the marketplace where value is contingent upon public visibility. The commercial nature of the artistic world is made blatantly obvious by the descriptions of the friendly artistic circles. The best described members of the artistic community are Welby, the elderly, successful Royal Academician and Suffolk the young and very talented, and entirely unmarketable painter. The most convenient assumption about these two characters would be that their differing degree of past success defines their relationship to the marketplace of art differently, yet both of them are painfully aware that critical success (and the commercial one deriving from it) is not dependent upon the inherent quality of the artwork, rather, but on the power of press and one's position in the marketplace. This conclusion is driven home by the conversation of the Suffolks. Mrs Suffolk, the

suffering wife of the improvident but very talented painter, asks the rhetorical question:

‘Why don’t we have private patrons, as we used to have, and never mind the public? To think of a wretched newspaper deciding a man’s fate? I would not give in to it for a day.’

‘But we must give in to it, or else left behind in the race,’ said her husband. [vol.1. p.296]

It is the conflict between commercial circulation and public visibility on the one hand, and Mrs Severn’s essential instinct of solidarity on the other that eventually exposes the fact that art conceived as an intersubjective and domestic project cannot survive under the conditions of marketplace where commercial value is defined by display. Mrs Severn, driven by the instinct of female solidarity, makes the generous gesture of securing publicity for the toiling Suffolk. This gesture, however, is not something she could easily afford, and, moreover, she would also need her patron and good reviews. Her admirer Laurie, resists intervention in her interest, because publicly championing her work would offend her, he argues, just as much the public display of her musician daughter would be offensive. In other words, femininity and participation in the marketplace build up a tension, which the text fails to explore to any extent.

In the short late novella, ‘Mr Sandford,’ Oliphant chooses to explore the consequences of intersubjective authorship through the character of a male artist.¹⁴⁰ This strategy is somewhat reminiscent of the one previously used in *The Quiet Heart*, where a pair of artists consisting of a male and a female explored their different possibilities of deploying the same concept of art. Mr Sandford, the elderly painter – who has gained plenty of appreciation from the public both in critical and financial terms – can be seen here as the male artist whose identity, educational capital, and intersubjective concept of art turn him into one of the cross-dressing characters. The similarities between Mrs Severn and Sandford are remarkable. Not only do they share the lack of educational capital, for Sandford is a self-made man just as Mrs Severn is a self-taught artist, but both use financial remuneration in similar ways. This is not apparent first, as Sandford is not free from financial ambition in the way Mrs Severn is. Yet, significantly, Sandford’s financial ambition is also carefully distinguished from self-fulfilling financial purposes. For him, the ultimate objective of earning is social elevation and an opportunity to give better education to his

children. Already at his young age, he had laid 'the foundation of his reputation, and was a rising man,' [36] In other words his identity as self-made man is firmly established, and Oliphant tended to see essential similarities between self-made men and female artists.

Now, however, Sandford is approaching sixty, and he suddenly finds that his art, which had secured him so much success and commercial prestige, and 'popular approbation,' [21] sells no longer at the marketplace. Now both his patron Lord Okeham leave his studio without buying anything, and the Royal Academy rejects his picture as well. This event has been read, most commonly, as an indication of the painter's mediocrity, or, alternatively, as an indication of his talent burning out. Yet, Oliphant is careful to identify the 'ebb-tide' in the character's life as a failure to attract custom rather than an explicit artistic failure. At the opening of the story, his success is defined in terms of publicity, marketability and general social acceptance. He reached 'the heights of his profession' [21] very early, and it is not stated directly whether he is at the height of his artistic creativity as well. Furthermore, the heights of his profession are defined in the discourse of popular success in the marketplace, as '[h]e had never been emphatically the fashion, or made one of those great "hits" which are far from being invariably any test of genius.' [21] His popularity is proved by commission and his income was like 'an official income.' [22] Now, however, his failure is equally a failure in securing popular success. While his declining artistic powers may be partially responsible for his failure, it is more likely that it is a failure of reception. This is rooted, to some extent, the nature of artistic fashions that determine the success or failure of the work. His painting, the historicising painting of 'The Black Prince of Limoges' is talked about as belonging to the old school. As a young minor character comments, his painting is full of '[o]ld models got up as Shakespearean kings and that sort of thing [...] conventional groups trying to look as if they were historical.' [42] As the young character continues, tastes have changed and the new generation wants 'more profound knowledge of the human figure and beauty in the abstract.' [43] But, as a telling comment suggests in the story, this change cannot just simply be attributed to the platitude of changing tastes. Rather, as Sandford indicates, his failure is that of his artistic attitude in the time when the

‘heaven-born artist’ carries the day, rather than the artist who believes in locating himself on a sociable continuum. [41]

The ending of the story reinforces the claim that value is simply measured in public, marketable terms. Sandford, the family man, for whom the pragmatic purpose of art had been to provide for his family, and who saw his art not only in a materially domestic context but also as organically linked to his family, is increasingly worried about his looming failure as a domestic provider. Sandford is contemplating suicide then decides against it but the situation is saved by his death in an accident. As the final authorial comment suggests not only his life but also his death takes place in a social way.

Perhaps with some of us, too, that dying which is a terror to look forward to, seeing that it means the destruction of a home, may prove like the painter’s, a better thing than living even for those who love us best. But is not to every one that it is given to die at the right moment, as Mr. Sandford had the happiness to do. [147-8]

And, it is unnecessary to say that his death increases the market value of his painting again, reinforcing the previous claim that success in the marketplace is entirely unrelated to quality.

In her essay *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf attempts to redraw the map of female literature as produced by her contemporaries. As she joyously declares,

it is certainly true that women no longer write novels solely. There are Jane Harrison’s books on Greek archaeology; Vernon Lee’s books on aesthetics; Gertrude Bell’s books on Persia. There are books on all sorts of subjects which a generation ago no woman would have touched.¹⁴¹

While Woolf’s pleasure over the expansion of women’s literature was obviously justified, it is also true that she associated women’s literature of the previous generation with fiction only. This observation was probably rooted in the fact that in the tomes of early twentieth century literary histories, women’s literature was largely invisible. Yet the careful reading of Oliphant’s journalism belies Woolf’s statement: Oliphant’s writing, describing women’s literature of her present and past, shows that other genres – if perhaps not Greek archaeology – were actively pursued by women writers, and their diverse writing preexisted Woolf’s generation. Moreover, Oliphant’s incipient theorising about the conditions of female authorship has also

outlined general models of female productivity, and by locating them in nature rather than in resistance, she also legitimised the wide-ranging activities of her foremothers and contemporaries, and she even asserted that women's fundamental qualities made them the ultimate literary producers. Indeed, the very existence of Oliphant's analysis of female literature is further evidence of the diversity of women's writing. In the next chapter, I shall move on and examine the particular position of the practising female author in the marketplace, and attempt to examine how successful her bid to autonomous literary creativity was in an increasingly professionalising world.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ George Eliot, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists,' in George Eliot, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, edited by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 140-163. Cited from p. 140.
- ² Kristin Brady, *George Eliot*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992, p. 46, and Gillian Beer, *George Eliot*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986, pp. 21-3.
- ³ June Sturrock, 'Literary Women in the 1850s and Charlotte Mary Yonge's Dynevor Terrace,' in Nicola Diane Thompson (ed.), *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 116-134.
- ⁴ Joanne Shattock, 'Introduction' in Joanne Shattock (ed.) *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 1-7. Quoted from p.2
- ⁵ 'Modern Novelists – Great and Small' *BM* May 1855, p. 555.
- ⁶ Cohen, Monica F. *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, Quoted from p. 2.
- ⁷ 'Miss Mitford,' *BM* Jun 1854.
- ⁸ 'Modern Light Literature – History' *BM* Oct, 1855, p. 437.
- ⁹ 'Mitford' *BM* Jun 1854, p. 660.
- ¹⁰ 'Mitford,' *BM* Jun 1854, p. 658.
- ¹¹ 'Modern Novelists Great and Small' *BM* May 1855, p. 555.
- ¹² 'Modern Light Literature – History,' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 448 and p. 444.
- ¹³ 'Modern Light Literature – History,' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 442.
- ¹⁴ Richard Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, London: Dent, 1973, p. 270.
- ¹⁵ Altick, *Victorian*, p. 272.
- ¹⁶ 'Modern Light Literature – History,' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 442.
- ¹⁷ Altick, *Victorian*, p. 280.
- ¹⁸ 'Mr Thackeray and his Novels,' *BM* Jan. 1855, p. 86.
- ¹⁹ 'Modern Novelists Great and Small' May 1855, p. 555.
- ²⁰ 'Modern Novelists Great and Small' May 1855, p. 555.
- ²¹ 'Modern Novelists Great and Small' May 1855, p. 555 and 'Modern Light Literature – Society' *BM* Oct 1857, p. 426.
- ²² 'Modern Light Literature – Art' *BM* Dec 1855, p. 708 and p. 704.
- ²³ 'Modern Light Literature – History' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 437.
- ²⁴ 'Modern Light Literature – Art' *BM* Dec 1855, p. 708.
- ²⁵ 'Modern Light Literature – Art' *BM* Dec 1855, p. 709.
- ²⁶ Josephine Donovan, 'Toward a Women's Poetics' in Shari Benstock (ed.), *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1987. pp. 98-109. Reference to p. 103.
- ²⁷ Elisabeth. Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 2
- ²⁸ Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women,' in Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, London: Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 356-361. Reference to p. 356.
- ²⁹ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London : Methuen, 1981, p. 106
- ³⁰ Valerie Sanders. 'Women, Fiction and the Marketplace' in Joanne Shattock (ed.) *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001 pp. 142-161, quoted from p. 143.

- ³¹ *The Quiet Heart*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood's 1854; *The Athelings, or Three Gifts* Edinburgh and London: Blackwood's 1857
- ³² Cohen, *Professional*, p. 2.
- ³³ *The Athelings, or Three Gifts*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood's, 1857.
- ³⁴ The theory of female authorship as transgression is particularly eloquently discussed by Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England: 1830-1880*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993.
- ³⁵ 'Scottish National Character,' *BM* Jun 1860, p. 721
- ³⁶ 'New Novels,' *BM*, Sep 1880, p. 379. Later in the same article, she talks about Schecherezade [sic] the archetypal female storyteller (p. 388)
- ³⁷ 'Autobiographies no III: Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle' *BM* May 1881, p. 619 and 'Autobiographies no VI: In the Time of the Commonwealth' *BM* Jul 1882 p. 81.
- ³⁸ 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu' *BM* Jul 1868, p. 12 and 'Autobiographies no VII: Mme Roland' *BM* Apr 1883 p. 490 and p. 495.
- ³⁹ 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Dec 1889, p. 866 and p. 868.
- ⁴⁰ 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford,' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 290.
- ⁴¹ 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford,' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 290.
- ⁴² 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Mar 1887, pp. 438-40.
- ⁴³ 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Nov 1889, pp. 713-715.
- ⁴⁴ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, pp. 481.
- ⁴⁵ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, pp. 481.
- ⁴⁶ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 446 and p. 448.
- ⁴⁷ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 219.
- ⁴⁸ 'Autobiographies no III: Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle,' *BM* May 1881, p. 639.
- ⁴⁹ 'Autobiographies no VI: In the Time of the Commonwealth,' *BM* Jul 1882, p.80
- ⁵⁰ 'New Books,' *BM* Feb 1873, p. 214.
- ⁵¹ 'New Books,' *BM* Feb 1873, p. 215.
- ⁵² 'New Books,' *BM* Feb 1873, p. 216.
- ⁵³ 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 294.
- ⁵⁴ Mermin, *Godiva*, p. 129.
- ⁵⁵ For a good account on the historical changes in institutionalised education, see Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, London: Hutchinson, 1987, ch. 2.
- ⁵⁶ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, p. 12.
- ⁵⁷ "'Tis Sixty Years Since' *BM* May 1897, pp. 601-602.
- ⁵⁸ Mermin, *Godiva*, pp. 50-54 and Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism*. London: Hutchinson, 1987, p. 27.
- ⁵⁹ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, pp. 253-54.
- ⁶⁰ Mermin, *Godiva*, p. 53.
- ⁶¹ 'Mitford,' *BM* Jun 1854, pp. 664-6.
- ⁶² 'Modern Light Literature – History' *BM* Oct 1855, p. 437.
- ⁶³ 'Autobiographies: Madame Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 492.
- ⁶⁴ 'Old Saloon,' *BM* Dec 1889, p. 868.
- ⁶⁵ 'Old Saloon,' *BM* Mar 1887, p. 439.
- ⁶⁶ 'New Books' *BM* Sep 1873, p. 373.
- ⁶⁷ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, p. 478.
- ⁶⁸ 'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II' *BM* July, 1868, pp. 3-4.
- ⁶⁹ 'New Books,' *BM* Feb 1873. p. 218.

⁷⁰ 'Mme Roland,' *BM* Apr 1883, p. 493.

⁷¹ It is perhaps appropriate add that Oliphant's views on classical education in general displayed the same kind of politically motivated ambiguity. She obviously acknowledged the inherent value of antique literature and classical knowledge and this is eminently demonstrated in two of her articles on 'Ancient Classics' in 1874 that she contributed to *Blackwood's*. In these articles, Oliphant analyses the legacy first of Greek and then of Latin playwrights, philosophers and historians, and asserts that 'the classic literature of ancient Greece and Rome[. . .] is the only foundation of letters upon which every European nation is agreed.' ('The Ancient Classics' *BM* Sept, 1874). This is the reason why she finds women's exclusion from the blessings of classical education so unjust. Yet, at the same time, she was very aware of the political implications of classically based education. This ambivalence was not unique amongst feminists, for instance, Emily Davies, the prominent feminist and educational campaigner who generally championed similar educational standards for men and women, also refused to endorse classical education unconditionally. For Oliphant, classical education appeared to be the symbol on the basis of which women and female authors can be excluded from any claim upon political power. In her review on *The Subjection of Women* (*ER*, 1869) she declares that 'Modern language and literature may not be equal to the antique, but yet they count for something.' (p. 601) In other words, while she was aware of the desirable nature of classical education, she also saw it as a reassertion of the perfect nature of institutionalised knowledge.

⁷² 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, p. 478.

⁷³ 'Miss Austen, and Miss Mitford,' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 290

⁷⁴ Margaret J. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993, pp. 33-34.

⁷⁵ 'Autobiographies no VI: In the Time of the Commonwealth' *BM* July 1882, p. 80.

⁷⁶ 'New Books,' *BM* Feb 1873 p. 214.

⁷⁷ 'Autobiographies no VI: In the Time of the Commonwealth' *BM* July 1882, p. 80. and 'New Books' *BM* Feb 1873 p. 215

⁷⁸ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879.

⁷⁹ In the *Literary History*, Crabbe is said to be the last author taking full advantage of the patronage system. See vol. 1.

⁸⁰ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 208.

⁸¹ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 208.

⁸² 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 208.

⁸³ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 208.

⁸⁴ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 209.

⁸⁵ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 209.

⁸⁶ Scott's role in the process is also emphasised elsewhere. See 'The Old Saloon' Dec 1889, pp. 866-67.

⁸⁷ Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*. Oxford: OUP, 1987. Reference to pp. 113-4.

⁸⁸ Menand, *Discovering*, p. 113.

⁸⁹ 'New Books,' *BM* Sep 1873, pp. 368-374 and 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Dec 1892, pp. 858-60.

⁹⁰ 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Dec 1892, p. 858

- ⁹¹ 'Miss Austen, and Miss Mitford,' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 296.
- ⁹² 'New Books,' *BM* Aug 1874 p.181.
- ⁹³ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 212.
- ⁹⁴ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Dec 1888, p. 897.
- ⁹⁵ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Jan 1888, p. 120.
- ⁹⁶ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Jan 1888, p. 120.
- ⁹⁷ *The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, London: Macmillan, vol. 2. pp. 248-263.
- ⁹⁸ It would be probably appropriate to term these attitudes as masculine and feminine as they pertain to the gender rather than to the biological sex of the author. Yet, the difficulty of applying the cultural definition to nineteenth century contexts appears immensely problematic, for despite Oliphant's perception that some authors transgress their sex, it would sound implausible to assume that sex, for Oliphant, was a matter of choice.
- ⁹⁹ 'Modern Light Literature – Art,' *BM* Dec 1855.
- ¹⁰⁰ 'Modern Light Literature – Art,' *BM* Dec 1855.p. 709
- ¹⁰¹ For Mill's and Ruskin's opposing views upon women, see the loci classici *Of Queen's Gardens* and *The Subjection of Women* (1869)
- ¹⁰² 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 440.
- ¹⁰³ 'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford,' *BM* Mar 1870, p. 309.
- ¹⁰⁴ 'New Books,' *BM* May 1875, p. 616 and p. 617.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 444.
- ¹⁰⁶ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 445.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 445.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'New Books,' *BM* Nov 1873, p. 605.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'New Books,' *BM* May 1870, p. 629.
- ¹¹⁰ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871 p. 458
- ¹¹¹ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Dec 1892, p. 857
- ¹¹² Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, Part 3.
- ¹¹³ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, p. 473 and p. 495.
- ¹¹⁴ 'Two Cities–Two Books,' *BM* Jul 1874 and 'The Life and Letters of George Eliot,' *ER* Apr 1885
- ¹¹⁵ 'Two Cities–Two Books,' *BM* Jul 1874, p. 77.
- ¹¹⁶ 'The Life and Letters of George Eliot,' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 539.
- ¹¹⁷ 'George Eliot,' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 518.
- ¹¹⁸ 'George Eliot' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 519.
- ¹¹⁹ 'George Eliot' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 546.
- ¹²⁰ 'George Eliot' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 552-3.
- ¹²¹ *Autobiography*, (ed.) Elizabeth Jay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Henceforth: *JAL*, p. 15.
- ¹²² One could, obviously, use Showalter's indications in her *A Literature of Their Own* to demonstrate that this is not so, but, to my knowledge, there are surprisingly few works which do not assume one- to- one relationship between female body and writing. Some welcome exceptions are, perhaps, some scattered reference in Gagnier's *Subjectivities*, and in Josephine Donovan's essay 'Towards Women's Poetics' in Shari Benstock (ed.) *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*

Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. pp. 98-109. Some information can also be inferred from Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*.

¹²³ 'A Century of Great Poets—Walter Scott,' *BM* Aug 1871, p. 243.

¹²⁴ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 445.

¹²⁵ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 445.

¹²⁶ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 445.

¹²⁷ 'The Old Saloon' *BM* Dec 1889, p. 864.

¹²⁸ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Aug 1891, p. 273.

¹²⁹ *BM* Sept 1880, p. 380.

¹³⁰ 'A Century of Great Poets: Scott,' *BM* Aug 1871 p. 230.

¹³¹ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Mar 1890, p. 417.

¹³² 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 444.

¹³³ 'Autobiographies: Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle' *BM* May, 1881 p. 617.

¹³⁴ 'Harriet Martineau' *BM* Apr 1877 p. 474.

¹³⁵ 'Harriet Martineau' *BM* Apr 1877 p. 474.

¹³⁶ 'The Brontë-sisters' in *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign: A Book of Appreciations*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1897, pp. 3-59. Quoted from p. 5.

¹³⁷ 'New Books,' *BM* Aug 1870, p. 185.

¹³⁸ 'New Novels,' *BM* Sep 1880, p. 379.

¹³⁹ 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1874, p. 445.

¹⁴⁰ The novella was published in the volume *The Ways of Life* posthumously, in the company of a less remarkable short story 'The Wonderful History of Mr Robert Dalyell published by Smith, Elder and Co. London. Introduced by her own preface 'On the Ebb Tide.'

¹⁴¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, London: Hogarth, 1931, p. 119.

CHAPTER FIVE
JILL OF ALL TRADES: OLIPHANT AS AUTHOR

*it was nevertheless in periodical writing –
the medium she loved best – that she
attained perhaps her highest felicity of
style*
Blackwood-Lobban

‘A friendless woman:’ Oliphant and the Blackwood house

Here, for example, is an illuminating document before us, a most genuine and indeed moving piece of work, the autobiography of Mrs. Oliphant, which is full of facts. She was an educated man’s daughter who earned her living by reading and writing. She wrote books of all kinds. Novels, biographies, histories, handbooks of Florence and Rome, reviews, newspaper articles innumerable came from her pen. With the proceeds she earned her living and educated her children. But how far did she protect culture and intellectual liberty? That you can judge for yourself by reading first a few of her novels; *The Duke’s Daughter*, *Diana Trelawny*, *Harry Joscelyn*, say; continue with the lives of Sheridan and Cervantes; go on to the *Makers of Florence and Rome*; conclude by sousing yourself in the innumerable faded articles, reviews, sketches of one kind and another which she contributed to literary papers. When you have done, examine the state of your own mind, and ask yourself whether that reading has led you to respect disinterested culture and intellectual liberty. Has it not on the contrary smeared your mind and dejected your imagination, and led you to deplore the fact that Mrs. Oliphant sold her brain, her very admirable brain, prostituted her culture and enslaved her intellectual liberty in order that she might earn her living and educate her children? ¹

That is Virginia Woolf’s verdict on Oliphant’s authorial practice and achievement in her essay *Three Guineas* (1938) a book that continues her earlier discussion of the conditions of female authorship under Victorian patriarchy in *A Room of Her Own* (1929). The very fact that Woolf singled out Oliphant as one of the unwilling victims of patriarchy is not surprising, given the long-standing family connections between the Stephen family and Margaret Oliphant. Oliphant had not only known Woolf’s father, but one of her best friends was Woolf’s aunt Anne Thackeray Lady Ritchie, herself a member of the Woolf household and someone who could have acted as an informant for Woolf on Oliphant’s affairs.² Yet Woolf, perhaps inadvertently, established Oliphant’s reputation as a talented woman who never achieved her full potential.

In fairness to Woolf, it is important to point out that this image of Margaret Oliphant is not entirely unjustified: her *Autobiography* had done much to establish her reputation as a mediocre author, a ‘feminine’ writer, convincing critics of her failure on an aesthetic plane. Yet, Woolf’s critique is more important not merely for reinforcing Oliphant’s not very flattering reputation as a woman who never reached her full potential as novelist and literary critic. More important is what underlies

Woolf's interpretation of Oliphant's achievement: her view that there is but a single model of authorship with a key to unlocking human potential; its source is the freedom of mind, and its essential prerequisites are money and a room of one's own – and the lack thereof leads to the abridgment of talent and results in the production of aesthetically and intellectually inferior works.

While Woolf's thesis was immensely effective in persuading generations of critics of Oliphant's limited achievement as well as of the nature of good authorship, Oliphant's personal career and literary achievement evidence a more complicated scenario. Fully convinced of the tenability of the thesis that a woman's place is in the home, and fully committed to the implication of sociability inherent in domestic ideology, Oliphant attempted to pursue her professional project in a manner that deployed a conventional plot for Victorian professional women: professionalism by pursuing a project of intersubjectivity, enduring and productive human connections, and a system of mutual interdependence and a willed production of books for the marketplace. The success or failure of her project, influenced by the historical circumstances of the rising professional society, interrogates the project's viability. This chapter, therefore, considers two different issues. First it examines the initial success and subsequent failure of Oliphant's project of conducting authorship in nineteenth century female terms, and then moves on to examine how Oliphant attempted to secure critical authority for herself in the ever more specialising world of nineteenth century journalism. Secondly, while bearing in mind Oliphant's commitment to the social mission of fiction, it examines some areas of Oliphant's critical and social views: her praxis as art critic, her views on female sovereignty and on the woman question, and her practice of literary criticism. The strategies she appropriated closely influenced, in turn, not only her self-representation and her dealings with her publishers and general behaviour in an increasingly professionalising world, but also the critical evaluation of posterity.

When one considers Oliphant's authorial practice, one is struck by two factors: the first is how closely Oliphant's life followed what one might consider a characteristically Victorian female life pattern; the second is how typical, or indeed paradigmatic, Oliphant's career was amongst nineteenth century female authors. Amongst novelists, her career of combining literature and domesticity can be most

nearly compared to that of Gaskell; amongst mid-Victorian woman of letters to the careers of Mary Howitt, Eliza Lynn Linton and Geraldine Jewsbury who all wrote prolifically for different periodicals in different genres. For Oliphant, as well as for many of her mid-Victorian female contemporaries, the practice of writing for the female author was located on a natural continuum with other, domestic responsibilities: it was part of domestic sociability, and defined as a social act. In her *Autobiography* she describes the writing of her first novel as an essentially domestic enterprise, which derived naturally from her other domestic commitments.

In the time of my depression and sadness my mother had a bad illness, and I was her nurse, or at least attendant. I had to sit for hours by her bedside and keep quiet. I had no liking then for needlework, a taste which I developed afterwards, so I took to writing. There was no particular purpose in my beginning except this, to secure some amusement and occupation for myself while I sat by my mother's bedside [...] It was all very innocent and guileless, and my audience – to wit, my mother, and brother Frank – were highly pleased with it.³

As the quotation shows, the very act of writing is on a continuum with other domestic activities. It is performed in a domestic environment, at her mother's bedside, with no appeal to a 'room of one's own.' Its pursuit is no different from the pursuit of other female activities.

For Margaret Oliphant, not only the writing of novels but also the construction of her persona as published author – whose task is to carve out a space in the marketplace – occurred as a familial enterprise, and Oliphant entered the house of Blackwood by means of an influential introduction, again, in the way common among nineteenth century authors.⁴ In 1851, Mrs Wilson decided to launch her daughter's career by introducing her to their Wilson relatives, who later became prominent academics, and who actively supported their cousin's literary endeavours. Even more importantly, she also introduced her twenty-three year old daughter to her old friend Dr Moir (who contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine* under the pseudonym *Delta*), and to the proprietors of *Blackwood's Magazine*. The meeting between the young author who had already published a few novels and the Blackwood family is described in her *Annals of a Publishing House* in greater detail.⁵

Her connection with the Blackwood publishing house as a novelist soon led to a different aspect of authorship: to the introduction of Oliphant to the world of journalism. This pattern again appears to contradict expectations modelled on George

Eliot's career, but move from fiction to journalism was not uncommon in the world of Victorian letters.⁶ Though the house of Blackwood rejected her first novel, *Margaret Maitland* (1849), it proceeded to publish one of her subsequent novels *Katie Stewart* (1853). Her ability and reliability as a novelist led to the commission to write essays for *Blackwood's Magazine*, known affectionately as *Maga*. Writing for a periodical, again, does not constitute as much straying onto male territory as much as it might appear in the light of the modernist hierarchies of literary genres. In that period, there was no 'clear-cut dichotomy' between 'literature' and journalism, and nearly all Victorian authors were involved with the periodical press – it is enough to think of Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope in this regard.⁷ Both periodicals and fiction had a reasonably low cultural prestige: as Brake suggests, '[b]oth the novel and the periodicals attracted the epithet 'lighter' rather than 'higher' literature' – neither of them had the connotations of high culture.'⁸ Periodicals tended to have a hold-all and pre-specialised character, and that was particularly true of periodicals like *Blackwood's Magazine*, Oliphant's main outlet. As the very title 'magazine' indicates, this was a generic continuation of eighteenth-century miscellaneous periodicals, and its original articles were written in an apparently random variety of genres.⁹ Moreover, as John Gross explains, 'their tone was intimate, their aim to make the reader to feel at home. [...] Conducting a magazine was an altogether less austere occupation [than editing a review], more like running a theatrical troupe.'¹⁰

Blackwood's suited the female author for one more reason: although it was intellectually more serious than those specifically women's and children's periodicals in which a number of female authors published, its 'corporate identity' was that of a distinctly *family* magazine, as it habitually carried fiction, which made its intention of including women among its readers very clear.¹¹ Furthermore, the practice of anonymity was to the advantage of both the apprentice journalist and the female journalist: it allowed them to develop, while, in addition, it shielded the female writer from the public gaze. Oliphant herself published much of her literary criticism anonymously and even towards the end of her life, when anonymous journalism was increasingly felt dated, she found it necessary to assert that it was indeed the anonymity of publication that made free and unbiased criticism possible –

in the way that (for the twentieth century citizen) the institution of the secret ballot guarantees the authenticity of political opinion. As she put it,

criticism is always most free, both for praise and blame, when it is anonymous [...] the verdict of an important publication[...] is more telling, as well as more dignified, than that of an individual, whose opinion, in nine cases out of ten, becomes of inferior importance to us the moment we are acquainted with his name.¹²

Oliphant's career as a literary journalist began with her publication of an essay on Miss Mitford (June 1854), and it soon transpired that the arrangement was to the advantage of all the parties involved. The proprietors of the publishing house, John and William Blackwood, obviously trusted their young and versatile contributor, and her first literary article was soon to be followed by a flow of articles on diverse subjects. It seemed that the arrangement was also advantageous for the intellectual development of the young author, who, by 1854, had already published a string of novels with different publishers, earning a respectable income. She was aware that publishing literary criticism was hard work: the sheer weight of reading made it wearisome, and the very practice of anonymity of criticism was not conducive to advancing one's individual reputation. However, reviewing offered the sustained and financially rewarded opportunity for self-teaching, and the interplay between her reading for reviewing purposes and her writing sharpened her critical acumen for considering other authors as well as feeding into her own work. Those 'intimate connections' thus created and thereafter systematically maintained with the Blackwood house generated an intellectually inspiring cultural milieu for Oliphant.¹³ During this period she soon acquired the technique of writing rapidly – journalism as well as novels flowed abundantly from her fertile pen, and the spontaneity with which she was able to write was also commented on in her *Autobiography*. The advantages of the collaboration were evident in the way that Oliphant produced within the first twelve months a variety of reviews on the greatest names of her age and of the recent past: Miss Mitford, Evelyn, Pepys, Thackeray, Bulwer and Dickens were only the most prominent ones she treated. In the carefully gendered field of Victorian journalism gender and issues neatly coincided: Oliphant was commissioned to write essays on issues that were either strictly in keeping with her gender, or at least not did not count as transgressive ones for the female author. Masculine genres such as politics, science, psychology and philosophy, classics and

drama remained for decades beyond her pale. Rather, she was commissioned to write in genres that lacked any implication of moral earnestness, in other words, in areas that were not reserved for the masculine ‘Victorian sage.’¹⁴ Moral and pedagogical enterprises were considered to be a female domain, and, helped by the fact that academic specialisation was still in its infancy, the new genres in the ascendant appeared accessible to the female journalist. Oliphant’s essays – historical studies of royal figures (like those of the Strickland sisters) or studies in art history (like the one on Mrs Jameson) – covered new areas of non-fictional scholarship. Oliphant’s contributions to *Blackwood’s* until the 1860s rigorously followed these lines, and her discussions of popular literature, or even the woman question, in spite of their volume and versatility, exploited areas culturally marked feminine, or at least not explicitly masculine.¹⁵

Oliphant’s relationship with the Blackwood house brings into sharp focus one of the characteristics of publisher-author relations for many Victorian women of letters: that Oliphant, so committed not only to the idea of Victorian domesticity and of a home-based identity, but also to the idea that authorship was naturally a social act, established a particularly ‘friendly’ relationship with the Blackwood house.¹⁶ Their relationship could be characterised by Langland’s term the ‘ideology of mutual interdependence,’ and she aimed to ‘achieve [...] success [...] through collaboration rather than competition.’¹⁷ Oliphant consistently perceived their relationship as based on a personal obligation rather than seeing it in business terms. The Blackwood family acted in relation to Oliphant more often than not as bankers, personal friends and customers, in other words, their business relations appeared to be also family- and friendship-based arrangements. Indeed, there is a telling anecdote included in her *Autobiography*: on her husband’s terminal illness in Italy in 1859, she turned to her publishers for financial help in the way people turn to family members in trouble. As she says, ‘I had to go on working all the time, and not very successfully, our whole income, which was certain for the time, being 20 a-month, which Mr Blackwood had engaged to send me on the faith of articles’ – the term ‘on the faith’ indicates the intensity and intimacy of these quasi-familial arrangements.¹⁸ These combined business and family relations further reinforce Oliphant’s concept of women’s literary labour, which describes writing and selling novels as a family enterprise or

an interpersonal one. She also legitimised her own writing by the very realistic family need of her earnings. Even when she was a young woman, the first honorarium she received was an extraordinary sum of money for her family, and her income was also indispensable for the upkeep of her family of destination as well, since her husband's glass studio never prospered.¹⁹ This kind of domestic-family arrangement, reminiscent of arrangements prevailing in lower-middle class households or other family businesses, undoubtedly prospered and governed Oliphant's life – it was a model not so much of feminine dependence on men and authority, rather, a model of social interdependence.

That this model of interdependence worked so unproblematically in the early stages of her career, is perhaps attributable to her young age, her married status (it is worth pointing out that she consistently maintained her reservations about married women choosing independent, earning careers, as it is evident in her reservations in her article 'The Grievances of Women' in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1880, due to their other, more pressing, commitments) as well as to the pervasive influence of domestic ideology.²⁰ The integration of domestic routine and creative work further emphasised her commitment to the intersubjective nature of her project. A series of sea-changes, however, began to influence this model started around 1860. The death of her husband turned her into a *femme sole*, or an independent (if reluctant) female householder, and openly imposed public, earning responsibilities upon her, while the subtly changing world of literature increased the number of examples for female authors assuming different positions of literary authority for themselves. Oliphant's career from the 1860s onwards demonstrates a growing tension: between, on the one hand, her status as a highly regarded, prolific, and critically and commercially successful novelist and increasingly powerful cultural and literary critic with a developing distinct professional and occupational identity, and, on the other, an author who achieved only a limited amount of success and concomitant social authority in institutional and career terms.

In fact, her career history from the 1870s can be characterised by successive failures in terms of securing permanent employment and the cultural appreciation and prestige that some of her female (and most of her male) contemporaries with comparable ability and productivity enjoyed. Editorial positions were attractive,

because of the potential rise in editorial pay; launching a periodical could be thrilling, and as Onslow explains, editorship ‘could impart status, intellectual influence *and* financial stability.’²¹ [italics in the original] Moreover, the number of editorial positions increased dramatically as a result of what social historians term as ‘the rise of the professional society’ – arguably the most important social change in nineteenth century Britain.²² Professional society did not only reconceptualise previously existing occupations as professions but also created a number of new, paid occupations. This phenomenon has been vastly examined in the context of ‘pure professions’ such as medicine or law where both the redefinition of previous ‘trades’ as professions as well as the proliferation of ‘jobs’ is perceivable.²³ The position of literature and the position of publishing, though slightly different from these ‘pure’ professions, also underwent the same changes, and G. H. Lewes was able to announce in 1865 that ‘[l]iterature ... has become a profession,’ indicating that literature had found a place for itself in the occupational structure of its time.²⁴ The truth of his statement is evidenced by the establishment of numerous magazines in the 1860s, (with concomitant numbers of salaried openings), and this tendency continued with the rise of New Journalism in the 1880s and 1890s.²⁵ The proliferation of magazines and other salaried openings and the general spirit of professionalisation, were indeed, ‘democratic,’ phenomena, or as Menand’s evaluated it, ‘it promise[d] to open careers to talents [...] it provides the specialists necessary to serve the legal, financial and technological needs of a competitive and highly interdependent economy’ and this democratic phenomenon enticed female authors and allowed them to believe that the abundance of paid opportunities would enable their access to positions of power such as editorship.²⁶ Yet the democratic spirit of specialisation also involved exclusions. As Menand continues: ‘But some of its attributes seem neither democratic nor laissez-faire: [...] it seeks to monopolise not only the production of certain highly rewarded social services but even, [...] the production of those service’s producers.’ [113-4] Although editorship never involved any specific professional training, and thereby female editors could not be excluded on the basis of lacking such, it is interesting that a survey of female journalists suggests an opening gap opening up between the increase of opportunities and their availability to women. While there were a few female periodical editors during the

1860s and 1870s amongst Oliphant's contemporaries, very often, they either worked through 'familial or conjugal networks.'²⁷ Some were married to co-editors like Oliphant's friend Mrs Hall or Isabella Beeton or Braddon of *Belgravia*.²⁸ Alternatively, they edited specifically feminist journals like Emily Faithfull of *Victoria Magazine*; this would have held far too little mass appeal for Oliphant. Oliphant's background and aspirations would have pointed at a periodical in the league of *Blackwood's*, yet none of the prestigious literary magazines were prepared to offer her permanent, salaried editorial post. As far as other publishing houses were concerned, Oliphant's long and friendly and professional ties with *Blackwood's* worked to her special disadvantage. As Jay explains, most editorial houses would have refused her offers, 'being so well known as a factotum of Blackwood's, she was unlikely to attract offers from competitors.'²⁹ The Blackwood house, on the other hand, was a traditionally dynastic, male-run and masculine dominated business, unlikely ever to offer Oliphant editorship.

Her successive marginalisation in career terms is well-documented in the 1870s and 1880s, when she constantly fought for editorial positions that appeared commensurate with her experience, her abilities, her marketable name, her energy to write as well as to edit.³⁰ Her increasing desire was to compete on something like equal terms with her male colleagues, or at least to achieve an equal measure of career success. At the same time, of course, she was eager to maintain her own distinctiveness: the fact that her connections with the Blackwood family were quasi-familial ties. Her fight for editorship does not mean that she did not continue to write for *Blackwood's*, although this remained on a self-employed basis rather than as a contractual arrangement. But she increasingly perceived her career in the world of literature as a failure. Her long fight for a salaried post started, timidly, as early as 1854. During the 1880s, these intentions were a lot stronger and all of them defeated.³¹ In 1880, she approached *Macmillan's* who had a history of publishing educational literature to ask whether they were prepared to consider starting a children's magazine similar to the *St Nicholas* to which she had earlier contributed.³² In the 1880s, she had hopes of *Longman's*, and she was so sure of getting *Frasers's* that she even commissioned articles for revamping the magazine. In 1884, she was pressing the Blackwood company for contractually determined work. In 1885, she

experienced with disappointment that Leslie Stephen, who she considered long-term friend, refused to give her work on the *Dictionary of National Biography*.³³ She also set out her editorial plans to Craik for a society paper,³⁴ that utilised the cream of the foreign press, yet none of her hopes were realised.³⁵ She eventually managed to secure regular income from *Blackwood's* by writing her 'Old Saloon' series which ran from 1887-1892, and the 'Looker-On' series, a column of social commentary between 1894-1896 on a contractual basis, and she also managed to secure herself the editorship of the minor series of *Foreign Classics for English Readers* which the Blackwood firm brought out between 1877 and 1890. Nevertheless, the sense of career failure underscored the last two decades of her professional life, and this is evident in her correspondence included in Q. D. Leavis's edition of Oliphant's *Autobiography and Letters*.³⁶

'The porte-voix:' establishing critical authority

Oliphant's entire career in the world of Victorian journalism can be characterised as an effort to establish for herself critical authority in literature and social authority through writing. It is already Oliphant's early writing – her apprenticeship – for *Blackwood's* that can be characterised by the simplest or 'common sense' definition of professionalism: it was pursued with intellectual seriousness, and it was remunerated, though she only wrote in genres in keeping with her sex.³⁷ This period could be characterised as 'hidden professionalism.' Indeed, as Johnston and Fraser claim, women writers in the nineteenth century 'had actually been writing professionally throughout the century, often merely posing as amateurs, in an attempt to negotiate gendered discursive boundaries.'³⁸ 'Posing as an amateur' in Oliphant's case meant that she hid behind anonymity and the masculine persona in *Blackwood's*. Probably, as Haythornthwaite suggest, 'had her age and sex been known, her views would have lacked authority.'³⁹ Nevertheless, she discussed issues with intellectual seriousness, engagement and expertise that belied her initial lack of experience and absence of formal education. Her early writing displays the character of highly competent engagement with literary and historical topics. Her social position as a literary critic in the late 1870s and 1880s shifted from the position of

the hidden professional to a distinctly authoritative position as cultural custodian and arbiter of literature. Her voice derived its increasingly assertive cultural authority from a very gendered position: from one that Haythornthwaite interprets as a 'very definitely female and matriarchal [position], the literary equivalent of Queen Victoria.'⁴⁰ In both cases, two lonely, mature widows spoke from a distance, while their authority was ensured by the institutional authority of public entities (of the monarchy and the literary magazine respectively), transmitting their opinions. Finally, near the end of her career, Oliphant changed her tone again – some would argue, for a more masculine tone, but certainly for a more personalised one – when she assumed the position of a senior person talking openly and confidently to a younger audience. This is apparent in her series 'The Old Saloon' and in particular her 'Looker-On' series, when she relentlessly acquired a more assertive voice. Yet, despite these subtle changes in her critical persona, her voice was never particularly masculine or feminine. It was rather subsumed to the general tone of *Blackwood's*: she never tried to speak as a woman from behind the anonymous or corporate mask, and she nearly always 'kept her gender and her circumstances out of her reviewing.
,⁴¹

Oliphant's search for critical authority is best demonstrated by her participation in the critical specialisation that expanded from the late 1860s onwards. The early 1860s are usually appreciated in Oliphant's life as the period of critical, popular, and commercial success, achieved by the Carlingford series, yet these years also brought a notable shift in her general output.⁴² While novels – a stream of mediocre ones and some truly remarkable ones – still continued to flow from her pen, Oliphant became a more committed, systematic essayist and literary professional, who staked her claim to be an arbiter in social, cultural and literary issues. This process is first attested to by the dramatic increase in the sheer number of non-fiction titles. Before the decisive turn of 1860 – the end of her literary apprenticeship – Oliphant had already tried her hand with different genres of non-fictional prose in *Blackwood's*. Yet outside *Maga*, she only wrote one piece of non-fiction, the short, and rather dull book of Christian piety *Sundays* (1858). During the 1860s, and especially from the 1870s, Oliphant wrote a number of biographies and urban histories, and in the 1880s and 1890s, two book-length literary histories as

well. Her *Life of Edward Irving* (1862) is still an eminently readable biography and it secured Carlyle's praise and friendship for her.⁴³ 1868 saw the publication of *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II*, a collection of her historical articles previously published in *Blackwood's*. She continued to publish biographies in the 1870s – mostly literary and cultural biographies, such as the life of *Francis of Assisi* (1870), the *Memoir of Count of Montalembert*, (1872), and the literary biographies of *Dante* (1877) of *Molière* (1879) of *Cervantes* (1880) and of *Sheridan* (1883). In other cases, these new genres meant urban histories, like *The Makers of Florence*, (1876) which was to be followed by another four urban histories in the next two decades. Finally, Oliphant also wrote two synthesising tomes on literary history, *The Literary History of England* (1882) and *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892); her last major work, the *Annals of a Publishing House* (1897) was also literary historical.

Her growing interest in non-fiction in the 1860s also manifested itself in her increased involvement in journalism in *Blackwood's Magazine* and in other literary magazines such as *The Cornhill Magazine*, *The Edinburgh Review* and *Macmillan's Magazine*. Most of them represented the same family periodical character and catholicity of interests as her main outlet.⁴⁴ This interest is indicated by the mere increase in the number of essays written by her. Between 1860 and 1870, she published forty essays in *Blackwood's* and a number elsewhere. After 1870, *Blackwood's* alone published seventy-three essays by her in the next decade, and she also wrote a number of essays for her other outlets. It was not only the case that the sheer volume of her non-fiction increased so rapidly. In most of her articles, her general tone also changed quite dramatically. Their subjects included poetry, history, travelogues, sermons, French periodical literature and the reviews of the Queen's journals. Yet, the writing on 'books in general' in the earlier rambling articles became supplanted by sustained and regular literary criticism. This change in Oliphant's writing was related to a subtle change – the increasing specialisation – in the very field of literary criticism: in the mid-century, a 'transition and fragmentation from general into literary criticism, history, philosophy, sociology and science' took place.⁴⁵ The transition is perhaps best marked by the establishment in 1869 of *The Academy* which claimed to be a distinctly literary periodical.⁴⁶ While *Blackwood's*

did not follow the same wholesale specialisation and maintained its family magazine character (although, perhaps, in a slightly masculine manner) nevertheless, it also moved towards a more specialised system. This shift toward specialised criticism also redefined the profession of the literary critic: late Victorian 'specialist' critics tended to restrict themselves to one particular field only, in which they claimed profound expertise.⁴⁷ Yet mid-Victorian critics pursued a transitional strategy. They did not restrict themselves to one particular area; rather, they worked in different fields while claiming a high level of expertise in all of them: theirs was 'professionalism in writing rather than in subject.'⁴⁸ It was this strategy that Oliphant followed in the capacity as a *Blackwood's* essayist. While continuing to work on a medley of subjects such as visual arts, gender politics and history, and acting as a 'general critic,' or, as Onslow puts it, being a 'Jill of All Trades,' without specialising herself in any of the emerging branches of literature, she wrote on each of them expertly.⁴⁹ She also developed particular expertise in some disciplines: in the field of art history, on women's history with special respect to the history of female sovereigns, on the woman question, and most importantly, in the field of literary criticism.

Writing about art history was one of the branches of non-fictional writing in which female critics were permitted professionally to excel, and Oliphant joined the distinguished group of female art critics such as Anna Jameson, Emilia Dilke and Elizabeth Eastlake.⁵⁰ Again, it was family connections that opened her eyes to the new possibilities. She was introduced to the world of art by her husband, a stained-glass designer, and, as her *Autobiography* shows, writer-artist marriages were common among their friends.⁵¹ She often discussed the visual arts in *Blackwood's* between the 1850s and 1897, and her most important volume with passing comments on visual arts is *The Makers of Florence*. In these writings she reviewed contemporary art exhibitions, discussed the lives of artists and the interaction between artists and the increasingly commercialising world of visual arts. Her credentials as an art critic were less distinguished than Lady Dilke's, therefore, she pursued the project with apparent self-deprecation: as she claimed '[o]ur humble comments are for the ignorant.'⁵² She wrote from the perspective of a deliberate amateur, for whom matters of technique remained distant.⁵³ Most often, her

exhibition commentaries were focused upon the descriptions of paintings, as can be seen in her reviews of exhibitions of the Pre-Raphaelites in her article 'The Royal Academy' in 1876 and another in about 'The Pictures of the Year' in 1888.⁵⁴ It was precisely this stance – that of the populariser of knowledge about paintings, rather than the trained and original theoretician – that made her position so similar to that of other female writers, nevertheless, the descriptive method was particularly suited to a non-illustrated magazine. Beyond the pure narrative of visual storytelling, Oliphant's interest in visual arts was essentially sociological: she was interested in the 'economics of the production, patronage and sale of art.'⁵⁵ This interest led her to the explore the rivalries of artists in the marketplace, as demonstrated by *The Makers of Florence* and to discussing the advantages of the system of patronage which she found particularly favourable to the production of high quality art. As she points out, for Donatello the gift of an estate 'took away all the quiet of his life, he declared.' [141]. The brief discussion of the social circumstances of artistic creation, and the interest in the comparative examination of commercialisation versus patronage foreshadow her later discussion of the relationship between creativity and the market, as it was discussed in Chapter Four. While it might be argued that Oliphant consistently spoke from the position of the informed outsider, and her attitude was more that of an interested amateur than that of an original contributor, nevertheless, the interest art as a commodity was part of her general interest in literary sociology.

History, and in particular, the history of female sovereigns fascinated her. Her interest in immersing herself in history by writing about female sovereigns is not fundamentally different from the practice of other female non-fiction writers: as Johnston and Fraser point out, '[e]arly in the century histories by women are often about women.'⁵⁶ As Johnston and Fraser continue to explain, the fact that early female historians often confined themselves to the histories of female sovereigns achieved two different purposes: women 'could legitimately locate a space for themselves in the writing of women's history as a profession,' [241] and also 'they could reclaim a place for the women of history within the genre by rectifying omission and correcting the record.' [241] For Oliphant, the project of writing about female sovereigns overarched her entire career as a woman of letters, beginning in the 1850s with respectful comments upon Queen Victoria and progressing to the

historical and sociological analysis of the nature of female sovereignty in the 1880s. Her first article on the subject of history 'Modern Light Literature – History' (*Blackwood's*, October, 1855) discussed the history of female sovereigns, and, proving Johnston and Fraser's point about the affinity between the female historian and the royal female historical subject, four of the six books reviewed by Oliphant in the article had, indeed, been written by women. Yet, her original contribution to the process was the sustained analysis of the nature of female sovereignty. The historical and political commentary on the nature of queenship provided an analysis remarkably similar to her analysis of female authorship, and again proves the expansion of her repertoire as a social commentator.

Her discussion of female sovereignty started in 1855 with her comments on her most powerful female contemporary. Her last, posthumously published, volume (*Queen Victoria: A Personal Sketch*, published in 1900) also dealt with the Queen. Central to her analysis of the issue is the suitability of women to rule and the character of female sovereignty. In her early article 'Religion in Common Life' (February, 1856) while commenting on the royal couple attending church, Oliphant described the persona and position of Queen Victoria – then a young married woman and mother – as those of an essentially middle class woman.⁵⁷ This view of Victoria was indeed very common of the period: Langland points out that the '[a]ssociations of conventional propriety and familial devotion accumulated' around the person of the Queen.⁵⁸ Tellingly, Oliphant's cameo presents the royal couple (rather than the individual Queen) attending the service, with the Queen 'bearing her own full part of all the duties of common life,' and listening to a sermon propounding the middle-class idea that godliness is fundamentally compatible with the Victorian ethos of work. [244] In this analysis of the female sovereign's position, the dominant factors are the ordinariness and the middle-classness of the royal couple, representing the Queen as a simple wife and mother rather than a powerful ruler. These domesticated descriptions of the female sovereign continued well into the 1860s, when, writing her review 'A Royal Idyll' and another one 'The Queen of the Highlands' of the Queen's autobiographical writings, Oliphant similarly focused upon the representation of the queen as a private, domestic woman.⁵⁹ As she says in the latter article, '[t]here is not a word from the beginning to the end about the solemn matters of State that might be

supposed to occupy a queen. Her majesty, like the rest of us, puts the cares of her splendid profession by when she makes holiday.’ [242]

The representation of the Queen as an unassuming domestic creature, however, dramatically changed during the 1860s, and this can probably be attributed to Oliphant’s sensitivity to the uncanny temporal coincidence between her own widowhood and Victoria’s, and also to the vastly different interpretative possibilities offered by the widowed status of the female sovereign. From the late 1860s, Oliphant’s attention shifted to the slightly political, comparative analysis of the nature of rule as practised by a ruling queen in a ‘divine right’ monarchy, in contrast with that of the female sovereign in a constitutional monarchy. Her conclusions were drawn from the sustained analysis of the rule of the various queens in English history. These comments start in April 1867 with her evaluation of the historical conflict between ‘Elizabeth and Mary’ in her article in *Blackwood’s* and continue in the 1880s with her analyses of the life story of Queen Anne and with the Jubilee articles.⁶⁰ Central to her understanding of female sovereignty is women’s mental fitness to rule which derives from their rational nature. Not only was Elizabeth ‘self-controlled [...] strong enough to conquer her inclinations,’ but Mary Queen of Scots – for her amours, often represented as irrational – was also ‘fancy-free.’⁶¹ Female rule was not only equally rational with male rule, but was also superior. Female rule, as she saw it, represented stability and social cohesion in the times of transition. It is no coincidence that the political and possibly national conflict between Elizabeth and Mary was resolved peacefully:

Had they been men, it is probable that their inevitable struggle would have been attended with those commoner elements of tumult and bloodshed which cease to be exciting by long repetition, and that their strength would have been matched in a ruder way, and come to a more ordinary and practical result. Being women, these two queens, without sacrificing in the smallest degree their importance in history, enter into a more delicate sphere.⁶²

Despite the ideal fitness of women for rule, however, her political analysis suggests an underlying differentiation between the public role and action of the various female monarchs. According to Oliphant, full, autonomous public participation and political rule in the divine right-monarchy could only be accorded to the celibate female monarch, such as Queen Elizabeth, while the married female sovereigns – Queen

Anne and Queen Victoria – were fully suited to the position of sovereignty within the framework of constitutional monarchy.

The final word and most extensive articulation on the historical importance of the female sovereign are provided in Oliphant's last book *Queen Victoria: A Personal Sketch*, posthumously published in 1900. That volume also provides a succinct analysis of the public position and rule of the female monarch, and taken together with the 1887 and 1897 Jubilee articles, provides the description and the social justification of female rule. The adjective 'personal' in the title is largely deceptive. Although the bulk of the story is a truly domestic story, the emphasis is on the 'grander side of [the] existence' [68] of the Queen who, even when going to her wedding, 'belonged to her kingdom' [57] because she was the 'first servant as well as the Sovereign of the country.' [68] Yet, while the female sovereign exercises her rule only distantly and symbolically in the constitutional monarchy (unlike Queen Elizabeth who was a proper governor), nevertheless, she is a hard-working professional woman, who labours until the early hours of the morning, and whose rule – a 'visionary addition of power' – provides national and social cohesion.⁶³

Another particularly important area of Oliphant's evolving journalism was her increasing involvement in the Woman Question, one of the most hotly debated issues of her time. As Caine points out, it was 'a staple of nineteenth century serious journals.'⁶⁴ Writing about the Woman Question involved not only feminist journalists who 'carved out their own territory' but also a number of woman journalists with varying degrees of feminist or antifeminist leanings.⁶⁵ The fact that women wrote about social issues, was, of course, nothing new: as Martineau had discussed such issues as the slave trade in *Tait's* and in *Household Words* in the 1830s and 1840s.⁶⁶ By entering into the public debate about the Woman Question, Oliphant acted upon the intellectual challenge immediately; and proved that women did have a voice in public debates.⁶⁷

The late 1840s and the early 50s witnessed the first parliamentary debates about women's rights, primarily concerning *married* women's private rights. The issues at stake were infant custody, the accessibility to divorce for the middle classes, and married women's property, which became an increasingly important problem as the number of married women earning a living – often by their pen – was

increasing.⁶⁸ The campaign for married women's property aimed to secure married women's rights to their inheritance and earnings during marriage.

Oliphant became involved with these issues through her friend the writer and journalist Mary Howitt, an active supporter of the Infant Custody Bill, who had sent her Bodichon's famous pamphlet *Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854) which summarised married women's legal disabilities. In response to her friend's request, Oliphant discussed current legislation in two explicitly political articles in *Blackwood's*: 'The Laws Concerning Women' in 1856 and 'The Condition of Women' in 1858.

Oliphant's early position on divorce and Infant Custody was rather conservative. Divorce receives short shrift from her, partly because it exposes the woman to public gaze, disapproval, and ridicule – this stance was shared by a number of prominent feminists. Yet her most important objection to divorce was related to the existence of children: according her argument, both parents have equal rights to their children. As she states, '[t]he native right of father and of mother is as equal as it is inseparable, and we see no mode of deciding between them.'⁶⁹

Therefore the rights of the mother to infant custody are rejected:

the law cannot secure to her her children. Nature has not made *her* their sole possessor. God has not given to the mother a special and peculiar claim. It is hard, but it is true. The law might confer upon her the right to bereave her husband of this dearest possession, as it now gives him the right to bereave her; but the law can only, by so doing, favour one unfair claim to the disadvantage of another; for in this matter right and justice are impossible.⁷⁰ [*italics in the original*]

And finally, she finishes on an ironical note: 'Let man and woman part as they meet, solitary and single persons; let the unhappy children, fatherless and motherless, become the children of the State.'⁷¹

Oliphant's views upon Married Women's Property legislation are similarly conservative from a women's rights perspective, although she regarded it as a different issue, as it was unrelated to the idea of dissolubility of marriage, (which Oliphant steadfastly opposed). Her refusal had to do with necessity of legislation rather than its moral implications. For the lowest working classes, she suggested, it was unnecessary to legislate over women's earnings, simply because in those ranks of society, physical coercion mattered more than abiding by the law: in those circles, '[t]he rascal may punch his wife's head.'⁷² For the upper working and artisan classes,

it was unnecessary to legislate over women's earnings for another reason. In those families, she argued, women did not work outside the family, therefore, legislation about their earning, although not damaging, was irrelevant. Importantly, however, her reservations about women keeping their earnings were purely practical rather than showing an approval of the patriarchal appropriation of women's labour. Her model here is the single family enterprise, which she regards as the basis of economic activity, and where wives help in the enterprise. Her emphasis is on the 'recognition of [women's] worth in the family enterprise.'⁷³

Her earlier, conservative attitude to women's rights is also evidenced by her rejection of the possibilities of the vote and of women's access to professions. Her first article about the suffrage was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1866, written in response to the first aborted attempt in the history of female enfranchisement. On June 7, 1866, John Stuart Mill had presented a petition demanding the suffrage for the female householder, signed by nearly 1500 women, and its intention was to remove the discrimination from the existing franchise.⁷⁴ Women's employment and women's access to the professions was also a topical issue in the 1860s, starting with women's employment societies in 1859, and continued by the establishment of female presses such as the Victoria Press (1860), and gaining increasing importance as women increasingly demanded access to the medical profession. This struggle resulted in the admittance of the first female medical students to Edinburgh University in 1869.⁷⁵

Oliphant's article 'The Great Unrepresented' in 1866 was an immediate response to current events. It responded both to the increasing suffrage and employment agitation. She dissociated herself from both movements: she flatly refused the vote for the female householder, calling Mill's suggestion an 'insulting gift.'⁷⁶ She was equally certain about women's employment: she talks with unrestrained irony about hotheaded young women who are envious of men occupying the professions, who 'snatch at anything that will prove them to be on an entire level with the envied male creature, who can be a soldier, or a doctor, or a priest, or a statesman.'⁷⁷ In 1867, in a different essay on 'Novels,' she talks about 'Dr Marys and Dr Elizabeths' with similar facetiousness.⁷⁸

As the century wore on, however, the shape of the woman question also changed even as it continued to provide an important area of contribution for Oliphant in the social debate. On private rights, Oliphant's opinions remained ambivalent, especially about those private rights that undermined the idea of the indissolubility of marriage. She consistently rejected suggestions about married women with children being permitted to divorce, although, significantly, towards the end of the century she increasingly accepted divorce for childless women. Thus, the dissolution of the childless Anna Jameson's marriage – 'the superficial and brief union' – appeared acceptable by 1879.⁷⁹ It is blamed not only on the couple's blatant unsuitability, but explicitly on her cold and indifferent husband. Nearly twenty years later, when discussing in *The Makers of Modern Rome* the marriage and divorce of the presumably childless Fabiola a Roman matron of the early Christian period and an endearing social butterfly also secured her sympathy.⁸⁰ Fabiola is described as 'unfortunate in her husbands' [22], and her unsuccessful marriages are simply seen as disappointments. Not only is Fabiola's divorce forgiven, but Oliphant continued to excuse her by pointing out that her divorces 'had been perfectly lawful and according to all the teaching and traditions of her time.' [99] Oliphant, however, remained unyielding when children were involved, and this is apparent in her final judgement on the affair between G. H. Lewes and George Eliot. While accepting and admitting that the publicly known and undeniable adultery of Lewes's 'erring wife' in all time has been considered enough reason for their marriage's dissolution, she also suggests that it does not justify Lewes's decision.⁸¹ Legislation on Married Women's Property, on the other hand, was a different matter, and in response to the gradual legislative changes, Oliphant increasingly accepted it. Most prominently, she analysed the issue in a major article in 1869, written for *The Edinburgh Review*, where she reviewed Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869).⁸² While maintaining her previous scepticism about the efficacy of law in human relationships, nevertheless, she changed her tune about the need to protect married women's property. This change reflects the recognition that although the ideal of egalitarian co-operation would suggest that women's labour is appreciated, in practice women needed to be protected as individuals:

the injury of an insult – is done to all women by the present state of the marriage law in England.[...] To say that a woman loses all rights, all

property, all identity, as soon as she is married [...] is in its actual words an insult to every woman. Nobody believes that the bride, when her husband leads her from the church door over the scattered flowers, herself the very flower and blossom of humanity, the perfection and the origin of life, is the chattel of the man by her side – a thing transformed, lost to the world and the race, absorbed in him, and with no further claim to personal existence. [579]

And, she continues, '[t]he Married Woman's Property Bill, without offering any facilities for separation, or interfering in any way with the husband's position as a husband, offers a remedy which will cancel the sentimental grievance, and do as much for the real evil as can be done in this life.'⁸³

Her most radical change of opinion is related to the issues of the vote and of female public employment. These convictions were aired in public in her journalism in highly prestigious periodicals: in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1869, and in *Fraser's Magazine* 1880, and her views were reinforced by comments in the *Spectator* in 1874 and in 1884, and sporadically, in private correspondence.⁸⁴

Her change of view about legislation concerning women can be dated from 1869, when she first accepted the feminist demand for the vote for the female householder; arguing that

[t]he woman has most likely fifty times more experience, more practical knowledge, possibly more common sense, almost certainly more education except as regards Latin and Greek; and to tell us that she is not equally able to choose her county member or for that matter, if she likes it, to propose him on the hustings, is simply nonsense.⁸⁵

Her identification with the suffrage movement from this moment remains one of her most basic commitments, which she repeatedly voices in other articles. In a short article in *The Spectator* of March 7, 1874, Oliphant expresses her irritation about the 'hot railings' against her side.⁸⁶ Her longest, and most emphatic statement demanding the vote, 'The Grievances of Women,' was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1880.⁸⁷ In this article, she emphasises the injustice underpinning the female householder's legal disability to vote.

I think it is highly absurd that I should not have the vote, if I want one – a point upon which I am much more uncertain. To live for half a century, and not to have an opinion about politics, as well as upon most other subjects, is next to an impossibility. [242]⁸⁸

In 1869, her position on women's access to the professions also changed, and she not only came to approve of women's medical training but actively championed it. In 1869, she argued that 'educated medical women well qualified to treat female

diseases would be a great boon to society.⁸⁹ In the same article, she even refers to the active participation of women in politics. The perspective that women 'would be of admirable use in many practical matters, and could work upon committees, and manage poor-laws, and education, and reformatory movements, and boards of works, and all the benevolent-political work of the country, as well as any set of men,' now seemed a realistic possibility.⁹⁰ In 1880, she reiterated her view that women should be allowed to become doctors and politicians and located women's access to professions in women's inalienable connections to others. Oliphant's position in fact recalls what Cohen summarises as Tory feminist tradition. 'Tory feminists' Cohen suggests, 'insisted on the religious sanctity of women's service both to the family and to the larger community in an effort to promote greater equality for women.'⁹¹ This supports Clarke's observation about the 'unmistakable feminism' in Oliphant's work.⁹²

Oliphant's commitment to developing a distinct specialisation for herself is perhaps at its most obvious in the field of literary criticism, where she not only developed an extensive range and wrote prolifically, but was profoundly committed to improving scholarly accuracy, and also introduced two different discourses into her own practice as literary critic and historian after 1870. In May 1870, with the support of the editor John Blackwood, she launched the series 'New Books' which ran until July 1879 notching up in twenty-three articles altogether. This series ran parallel with another, specifically literary series of articles, 'A Century of Great Poets,' spanning the history of English and Continental Poetry in eleven instalments, and a series of essays on 'Autobiographies' (1881-1883). One of her discursive practices can be termed 'reviewing,' discussing living authors and a number of new books in one article, and answering to the immediate needs of readership and editors, while the other is the discourse of the 'literary historian,' focusing upon a single author in one article. These two terms are historically inappropriate, because the reviewer, just like the literary critic or historian would have been called 'general critic' in the nineteenth century.⁹³ Yet Oliphant herself was very aware of the difference. As she put it in her article 'American Books' in 1871: 'The reviews, the magazines, and journals of the day, are the proper places for the work of the day; the work which is intended to be placed in the library should be complete.'⁹⁴ For her, the

difference between these two functions of the literary critic turned on the question of whether the subject was alive or dead, and she also explained how 'criticism changes into history' upon the death of the author.⁹⁵ Yet, the deeper analysis of her articles suggests a more profound difference between the critical methodology developed in these two kinds of writing.

Oliphant practised 'reviewing' extensively on the pages of *Blackwood's* between 1870 and 1897. These essays, amounting to about a hundred, were, as the rubric 'New Books' suggests, reviews of recent books, not necessarily in the field of literature in the narrow sense, but also in other, non-fictional genres like theology, travel writing and historiography. This genre had its own predecessor in the shorter series in 1855-56 (Modern Light Literature, 1-6) in which she reviewed poetry and non-fiction in the same article, but the earlier series were often rhetorically unstructured, rambling discussions with few telling points, and sometimes even failed to identify the books discussed. For instance, in 'Travellers' Tales' (Nov, 1855) there is a lengthy discussion about a text by Kingsley which is not identified at all. The series in the 1870s, however, are carefully structured, providing bibliographical and publishing details of the books discussed.

The rhetorical strategy of the essays in 'New Books' deserves further analysis, not only because it demonstrates Oliphant's developing strategies in argumentation, but it also shows that she discovered a template and a methodology of analysis to which she then self-consciously adhered. These monthly essays commonly start with long preambles on the current status of literature or of the discipline discussed, touching on issues such as the relationship between various art forms, the degree of autonomy of art from history, the general prestige of literature in society, and the purposes of literary criticism. Sometimes, the tone of these opening paragraphs is uncomfortably heavy, inclined to what Shattock calls 'expansive pronouncements':⁹⁶

It would be perhaps a bold assertion to say that few ages have been so fond of historical investigation as our own. History, in all times in which the intelligence has been lively and free, has taken a first place among the subject of interest which occupy at once the student and the more superficial reader, giving pleasure alike to the profound investigator of the past and to him who snatches his lesson as he hurries through those busy ways of common life which permit lingering.⁹⁷

This is the opening of her essay 'New Books' in *Blackwood's* July 1875, and beside the magisterial tone, it also demonstrates the sociological interest of the article. This interest in literary sociology suggests that, for Oliphant, the literary work was not only a correlative of the autonomous subjectivity that created it; rather, literature existed in correlation to its social and historical context. This is evident in her comments analysing history's effect upon creativity. In one comment, she suggests, literature can be born under historical turmoil: 'The Waverley novels [...] had their beginning amid the din and crash of battles.'⁹⁸ Later, returning to the same issue, she modifies her view as she suggests that poetry is the only art which flourishes 'upon popular commotion,' while to other arts, 'peace is necessary.'⁹⁹ Despite the contradictory character of these statements, it is obvious that Oliphant sees the creation of art as inextricably linked to the society that produced it. Her interest in the social dimensions of literature is also evident in her comments on the newly emerging professions within literature, such as the profession of the critic and the literary translator. On writing on the social appreciation of the literary translator, she laments the low appreciation of that kind of labour. As she says: 'It is easier than letting lodging or going out governessing; it is the one thing which everybody can undertake who has any knowledge, however fragmentary, of foreign language. And this idea pervades even minds better qualified for the work.'¹⁰⁰ The increasing power of the press and the commodification of literature are inevitable facts for her, yet her ambivalence is obvious in the comment on the 'reign of the special correspondent' who, regrettably, 'shares the security of the preacher.'¹⁰¹ At the same time, other, newly rising professions deserve her praise and acknowledgement, therefore, both the essayist – the mediator of knowledge – is highly valued.

Another important and closely related topic of these preambles is the social role, responsibility, and indeed, mission of the literary critic. Aware of the contemporary tendency to debase criticism by 'soil[ing] it by so much ignoble use,' now she stands up to the defence of the literary criticism by suggesting that yet is 'so worthy and noble an art.'¹⁰² For Oliphant, the literary critic appears the ideal literary workman:

The faculties necessary for the critic are almost more distinctly marked than those required by any other literary workman. He must have the power of close observation – the eye to see, the skill to analyse; he must

combine much positive knowledge, and confidence in his own power and judicial authority... and above all, he must have true sympathetic insight [...] he should see the mind that produced [the book].¹⁰³

These analyses of the current historical and sociological context – the art and responsibility of literary criticism, the connections between history and literature – then, are continued by the reasonably detailed analysis of the individual works, often arguing with the help of lengthy quotations. In discussing recent novels or theological and historical works, there is very little background provided about authors – an understandable fact, considering that she reviewed five or six different recent pieces in nearly every monthly issue of *Blackwood's*. Her reviews of novels and poetry include emotionally deeply responsive readings, never with much interest in plotline analysis, unless pointing out improbabilities, such as the author's insensitivity to social mobility in the discussion of Reade's *Put Yourself in His Place*, where the author assumes that the female character can take a crash-course in gentrification.¹⁰⁴ Oliphant's analysis focuses psychological characterisation, especially in the discussion of novels. These reviews offer an insight into Oliphant's analysis of the *craft of the novelist*: for its perennial charm, she recommends the loveplot, she discusses real-life probability and fictional possibility, and she enters into a lengthy debate with Besant on the art or craft of novel writing. She also discussed the representational potential of the different art forms. Musicians and painters are the appropriate subjects, while the young poet's 'studies are less social, and less apt to lend themselves to narrative.'¹⁰⁵

Authorship of male and female authors – its nature and social conditions – looms large in these articles, as shown in Chapter Four, but these analyses are occasioned by the analysis of literary biographies and memoirs of female authors, rather than the biographies of authors of the reviewed volumes. On the few occasions when the author of the reviewed text is analysed, he or she is regarded as a social agent negotiating with familial and general social forces supporting or curtailing their activity in the marketplace of literature.

It is an indication of Oliphant's versatility as a literary critic as well as of her intensive participation in the process of literary specialisation, that while establishing a specific methodology of reviewing, she simultaneously engaged with another, more panoramic literary critical genre that can best be likened to the long, broad

appreciations by Saintsbury and A. C. Bradley, and other, more successfully canonised literary critics whose work followed hers only by a decade and a half. This second type of interrogation of literary history 'proper,' aiming at writing the closed chapters of the literary history of the past, she also began in the 1870s and is perhaps first observable in her series 'A Century of Great Poets,' in which she surveyed the work of English, French and German poets over a century, and it is this methodology that she continued to pursue in her three-volume *Literary History of England in the end of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (1882). These biographical articles often serve as the basis of her biographical portraits such as those on Molière and Sheridan, assigning Oliphant a place as one of the early comprehensive historians of English literature. The biographies then provide the framework for the analysis of primary texts; the analysis, however, is usually limited, and it is based on the assumption that the reader is familiar with the text. This strategy is best exemplified by the dramatic portraits of the *Literary History of England* volumes. This volume indeed offers a panoramic overview of the period, highlighting the individual great characters. The material is organised into chapters around individual authors (e.g. chapter IV on Keats in volume iii) or pairs of authors (chapter iii in volume iii on Shelley and Byron). The detailed and psychologically sensitive analysis of biography – the person behind the works – is then illustrated with excerpts from poems without too much dwelling upon interpretative detail.

The best way to demonstrate the difference between her reviewing of works by contemporaries and her statuesque, fully-fledged representations in the literary Pantheon is to survey her recurrent discussions of *Jane Eyre* – the heroine, the literary phenomenon, and finally the author. Her changing treatment of the novel and its rebellious heroine amply demonstrates not only Oliphant's evolving views, but also adaptation of critical strategies for the demands of the two kinds of literary critical discourses. The comparison between her different statements on *Jane Eyre* suggests a slight shift of her views about the literary significance of the novel, and also a transition from the lively and spontaneous earlier response to an awareness of canonisation of the Brontës. In 1855 ('Modern Novelists: Great and Small' in *Blackwood's*) a few years after the publication of the novel, and in the year of Brontë's death, she first approached the *Jane Eyre*-phenomenon from the perspective

of living literature: her main worry was the literary revolution that the new type of heroine caused, whose 'furious love-making was but a wild declaration of the "Rights of Woman" in a new aspect.'¹⁰⁶ The revolutionary nature of the phenomenon consisted in changing the manner of love-making in fiction: the desiring female subject speaking out made the 'reverent, knightly, chivalrous true-love' look obsolete. [557] She returned to the issue in 1867, in her article 'Novels,' where she further discussed Jane and Shirley as trend-setting representatives of female passion in fiction. She specifically identified Jane's "'protest" against the conventionalities' of the world as the starting point and literary legitimization of sensation fiction, the main topic of the article, whose passionate heroines she considered both a misrepresentation of human nature as well as an abridgement of the domestically cohesive nature of domestic fiction.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to the reviews, her comprehensive literary historical writing on the Brontës in 1897, contributed to the volume *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign* (1897), focused upon a different perspective of the Jane Eyre phenomenon.¹⁰⁸ Writing from the perspective of composed posterity, Oliphant toned down her initial reservation about the immodesty of the 'Wild declaration of Woman's Right' in 1855, by saying that while Brontë's heroines unbridled demands for love and male affection may elicit her personal disapproval, yet, they are nothing else than women's longing and yearning for companionship and revolt against being 'left there to dry up and wither.' [24] Yet the commentary on Jane Eyre the heroine forms but a small part of the essay, whose focus is the Brontë-phenomenon as such: she comments on the circumstances and female motivation behind their creativity, as well as on the enormous impact of the trio on their audience personally as well as in terms of their work. Finally, Oliphant closes her discussion by commenting on the critical fate of the Brontë -sisters, who had fallen victim to the oft-condemned 'ruthless art of biography' again emphasising the fact that their career is complete. [56]

The comparative merits of the two kinds of literary history practised by Oliphant have been discussed in the past. Mosier found reviewing evanescent and even ephemeral (certainly full of internal contradictions and consistencies, the whole body taken together).¹⁰⁹ But for readers with a historical interest, the evaluation may easily be the reverse. Her literary criticism tends to use assertion rather than

argument, and provides a respectable yet fossilised and static image of authors with tamed biographies and with little textual analysis, and also with the unspoken intention of securing the author discussed a place in the Gallery of the Good and Great. Reviews, on the other hand, show the social process of 'literature making,' evolving from complex impulses such as authorial intentions, market demands and literary traditions. The process of sociology shows the living organism of literary history, as well as the process literary canon formation. These articles provide a goldmine of Oliphant's evolving ideas as well as of the evolving culture of the nineteenth century.

While Oliphant established for herself the two different discourses of writing literary journalism and literary history in the 1870s, the series 'Old Saloon' again shows a different turn in her career. This series ran between 1887 and 1892 in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and these articles offer a synthesis of Oliphant's two different rhetorical and methodological strategies of literary analysis. The very first article in the January 1887 number of *Blackwood's* identifies the (masculine) saloon as the editorial office of *Blackwood's Magazine* at 45 George Street. It is described as a man's study with flickering candles and portraits of the founding fathers of the magazine. Yet the very title of the series suggests not only masculinity, but also a shift in terms of communication. Instead of the neutral listing of the 'New Books,' the title 'Old Saloon' indicates a different, distinctly social, venue where a communal act is taking place between the article and the community of readers. The critic here is the living host(ess) of a literary soiree, whose dominant attitude is that of the senior person (sometimes a patriarch, on other occasions a matriarch) serving books to the readers. Indeed, in these articles, Oliphant unabashedly puts herself (or the host) forward as the self-aware authority on literary matters, who, from the position of seniority, now recollects the years spent in collaboration with *Blackwood's* as well as in surveying the developments in English literature and considers them from the permanence of the institution of the magazine. Yet, apart from the change of the narrative and critical situation from the individual critic to that of collective authority, there is a significant change within the dense text of the essays. While the preamble-commentary structure is consistently maintained, these preambles are not concerned with 'literature in the making,' rather, they place the contemporary literary

developments in the framework of the past history of English literature. They also provide a synthesis of the two previously established trends of reviewing of contemporary works and giving a panoramic survey of deceased Great Authors. The preambles contain occasional cultural comparisons, such as the one between English idealisation of Christmas and the Scottish condescension to it, ('The Old Saloon,' February, 1887) but, in most cases, the historical framework suggests that each book reviewed is examined for its intimate, thematic, generic or stylistic connection with previous work. This project is facilitated by the numerous reviews of biographies and collected letters of great authors. These reviews include those of politicians such as Shaftesbury and of the great Victorian authors such as Browning, Tennyson, and Darwin, the correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, Thackeray's letters, Adolphus Trollope's memoirs of Frances Trollope. The selection of such works may have been occasioned by the ongoing demise of the great mid-Victorian authors, and it may be an indication of Oliphant's nostalgia, but it also indicates her intensive engagement and cutting-edge affinity with late nineteenth century interest in literary biography and collected works. The tendency to historicise and to establish literary connections is also evident in her article 'French Contemporary Novelists' (Old Saloon, May 1887), where the long preamble relates contemporary French fiction to the Golden Age of Edinburgh reviews and criticism when the critics 'had no novels to review' and when fiction only meant Scott, Austen and Ferrier, as well as to the mid-century wave of French fiction of Hugo, Sand, and Dumas who handled vice with impartiality.¹¹⁰ In these articles, current fiction occupies a limited space – she comments only on Haggard, Phelps and Hardy of her better-known contemporaries – but, of contemporary writing, the most challenging appear to be the recent self-analytical books on the nature of writing, such as Laing's and Besant's work. This series of articles serves as a summary of her previously established critical practice.

The late 1880s brought another turn in Oliphant's literary journalism, reflecting again her versatility and affinity with changing historical times. As Ian Small comments, the main characteristic of this period is 'the divergence of authoritative critical writing into either academic specialism or popular journalism.'¹¹¹ Oliphant never engaged with the burgeoning genres of New Journalism, which targeted the 'newly literate' readers and which focussed upon 'human interest' by

often deploying narrative format of the 'interview.'¹¹² Yet she embraced the role of the columnist, one of the most resilient legacies of 'Britain's 'New Journalism.'¹¹³ Her experiments in this new capacity were manifest in two different genres of publication. She continued to work for *Blackwood's* by launching a new column 'Looker-On,' (1894-96) – a series that Charlotte Yonge considered some of her very best journalism.¹¹⁴ At the same time, she branched out into writing for some of the newly established magazines, such as for the politically conservative *St. James Gazette* and for the *Spectator* as well as for the *Atalanta*: one of the niche-magazines, aimed at a readership largely consisting of young women.¹¹⁵ The series 'Looker-On' and her columns in the new magazines show both similarity to and difference from her other, lengthier and heavier journalism. In all of these new discursive essays Oliphant continued to speak from a very senior position: in the 'Looker-On,' she spoke as a masculine observer, while in the *St James Gazette*, Oliphant chose to speak from the gendered, senior and respectable position of 'A Dowager,' while she consistently spoke from the position of the observer and the detached social critic. But, importantly, these articles do not follow the systematic structure of her other longer essays, rather, they appear discursive commentaries on a medley of issues. 'Looker-On' in August 1894 discusses the August break after the season, laments on the degeneration of morals, deplores the daughters' revolt, and then briefly discusses Sarah Grand's work. Her columns in the *Atalanta*, characteristically called 'Things in General' (1893-94) and her 'A Commentary from an Easy Chair' (1889-1890) in *The Spectator* follow a similar strategy: these columns also discuss a variety of issues such as political questions on strikes and social anarchy, social issues such as the problem of poverty, and literary issues such as the writing of love stories, peppered with larger doses of personal reminiscence. The innovative character of these critical columns consists in their highly personalised tone, while their existence displays Oliphant's ability to renew herself and her journalism.

In *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill commented on women's inferior social position and social oppression and he demanded their legal enfranchisement. Within the highly abstract and theoretical framework, he also made a reference to women's professionalism. Mill's assessment of the possibilities of women becoming professionals was a rather a pessimistic one:

Women in the educated classes are almost universally taught more or less of some branch of other of the fine arts, but not that they may gain their living or their social consequence by it. Women artists are all amateurs.¹¹⁶

This chapter has attempted to explore the consequences of the rise of the professional society and of literary professionalism that John Stuart Mill himself experienced. One particular aspect of the concept of professionalism as used by Mill is its sociological dimension: the pure fact that a 'professional' has an occupational identity and is also capable of earning a living by (intellectual) labour, as well as gaining 'social consequence' and social say by it. Oliphant's career displayed the difficulties of the woman writer attempting to assert herself in late Victorian society. Judging from Henry James's and Hardy's irritation at her social and literary power as expressed in their representations of Oliphant, her social power was considerable. Oliphant also earned a professional living, thereby defying Mill's assessment of the impossibility of female professionalism. Nevertheless, Mill's assessment of the situation was not incorrect: Oliphant never enjoyed the support of a formal affiliation with an institution that male professionals of her standing in journalism secured for themselves. Her relationship with Blackwood's always remained under the necessity of constant renegotiations. At the same time, despite her status as an amateur in institutional terms, Oliphant participated in the process of establishing women's professional literature, not only by joining the ranks of the many Victorian women of letters, but by proving herself an expert in different areas of non-fiction, and also providing original contributions to contemporary social debates and to the establishment of different genres of literary criticism.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1938, pp. 165-66.
- ² Oliphant reviewed Stephen's *The Playgrounds of Europe* in 'New Books,' *BM*, Oct 1871, pp. 468-9 and Stephen's *Hours in the Library*, 'New Books' *BM*, Jul 1879, pp. 88-93.
- ³ Elizabeth Jay (ed.), *Autobiography of Mrs Margaret Oliphant*, Oxford: OUP, 1990, pp. 24-25. (henceforth: *JAL*) The novel, written under those circumstances, which is about an orphaned family, with an angelic elder sister taking care of the younger ones, and a dissipated older brother, was later to be published as *Christian Melville* (1852).
- ⁴ Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, p. 27.
- ⁵ *Annals of a Publishing House*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood's, Vol. 2. p. 316
- ⁶ Onslow, *Women*, pp. 200-210.
- ⁷ Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994, xii.
- ⁸ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 30.
- ⁹ See John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969, p.10. Gross compares the reviews and the magazines, and points out that reviews such as *The Edinburgh Review*, commonly published longer, more analytical articles on subjects of intellectual seriousness, while magazines were lighter and more eclectic.
- ¹⁰ Gross, *The Rise*, p. 10.
- ¹¹ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 68 refers to *Macmillan's Magazine* in this comment, but *Maga* carried fiction in the 1850s in exactly the same way as *Macmillan's* was to a decade later, even if perhaps its non-fictional material was slightly more serious and masculine.
- ¹² *The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Macmillan: London, 1882, vol. 2. p. 59.
- ¹³ J. A. Haythornthwaite, 'Friendly Encounters: A Study of the Relationship between the House of Blackwood and Margaret Oliphant in her Role as Literary Critic,' *Publication History* 28, 1990, pp. 79-88.
- ¹⁴ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993. For the discussion of the female sage, see pp. 95-106.
- ¹⁵ Mermin, *Godiva's*, p. 96.
- ¹⁶ See Haythornthwaite, 'Friendly Encounters,' pp. 79-87
- ¹⁷ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels, Middle Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995, p. 124.
- ¹⁸ *JAL*, pp. 69-70.
- ¹⁹ Merryn Williams, *Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986, p. 9.
- ²⁰ Her most outspokenly feminist article, 'The Grievances of Women,' (*Fraser's*, May, 1880) argued for the vote and for expanding women's employment opportunities, yet with reservations about married women's employment and suffrage. While this stance may sound conservative, it is also important to know that

Victorian feminism did not pursue the idea of married women's employment, and the nineteenth-century concept of the vote was rooted in the concept of household vote, rather than the individual one.

²¹ Onslow, *Women*, p. 103. These editorial positions were not inaccessible at all to and indeed, were not inaccessible to female authors in the previous generation as is demonstrated by the success of Christian Johnstone in the 1830s.

²² For a discussion of the rise of the professional society in Victorian Britain, see Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, New York: Routledge, 1990.

²³ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Virago Press: London, 1988, chs. 1 and 2.

²⁴ Cited by Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism*, Oxford: OUP, 1987, p. 114.

²⁵ The 1860s was the decade of founding magazines, attested to by the quick appearance of the *Cornhill* (1860-1875), *Macmillan's Magazine* (1859-1907) *St. James's Magazine*, (established 1861) and *Victoria Magazine* (1863-1980). Of course magazines were not the only kinds of periodicals established in the field, and other journals such as the weekly *All The Year Round* (1859-1895) *London Review* (1860-69) the *Saturday Review* (1855-1938) dramatically increased the number of periodicals which obviously provided more reading material and a platform for the journalist, but also salaried positions for their staff.

²⁶ Menand, *Discovering*, pp. 113-114

²⁷ Katherine Newey, 'Women and the Theatre,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.). *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 189-208. Quoted from p. 197.

²⁸ Onslow, *Women*, pp 120-124.

²⁹ Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 249.

³⁰ Trela, 'Introduction,' in D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*. Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995. pp. 11-31. Quoted from p. 22

³¹ Jay, Elisabeth. *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 15.

³² Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, p. 249.

³³ Williams, *Margaret Oliphant*, p. 140.

³⁴ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, p. 249-50.

³⁵ Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, pp. 249-250.

³⁶ Some letters included the Coghill-edition of the *Autobiography and Letters* illustrate her sense of marginalisation. (Margaret Oliphant, *Autobiography and Letters*, ed. Mrs Harry Coghill. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1974.) See her letter to her nephew Frank Wilson May 5, 1876, where she dryly comments on the financial benefits of Trollope's writing technique (p. 258); and letter to William Blackwood, expressing her bitter feelings about Mr Payn getting the editorship of *Cornhill Magazine* after Leslie Stephen's retirement (Oct, 29, 1882, pp. 310-11).

³⁷ For a discussion of the different concepts of professionalism, see Norman Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986, pp 36-56. It is also important to point out that in the nineteenth century, the element of payment was not even a serious element of the definition of professionalism, a set of activities pursued seriously and expertly but without payment also satisfied the definition of professionalism. For this explanation, see Monica F. Cohen, *Professional* p. 83.

- ³⁸ Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, 'The Professionalisation of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 231-250. Quoted from p. 231.
- ³⁹ Haythornthwaite, 'Friendly Encounters,' p. 79
- ⁴⁰ Haythornthwaite, 'Friendly Encounters,' p. 80
- ⁴¹ Joanne Shattock, 'Work for Women: Margaret Oliphant's Journalism' in Bill Bell, Laurel Brake, and David Finkelstein (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000. p. 170.
- ⁴² *JAL*, p. 101; Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1897, pp. 485-487, and Joanne Shattock, 'The Making of a Novelist: Oliphant and John Blackwood at Work on the Perpetual Curate,' in D. J. Trela (ed.) *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995, pp. 113-123.
- ⁴³ See Jane Welsh Carlyle's letter to Margaret Oliphant, 1862, published in the Coghill-Leavis edition of *Autobiography and Letters*, Leicester: Leicester UP, 1974, pp. 186-7.
- ⁴⁴ There was nothing entirely unusual about a woman extensively involve in journalism towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Martineau, Cobbe and Eliza Lynn Linton belong to the most prominent ones, and their entry into journalism was enabled by the openness of the profession- which had its loose structure, as different from the other, more organised professions.
- ⁴⁵ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 37.
- ⁴⁶ Brake, *Subjugated*, pp. 36-50.
- ⁴⁷ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 4.
- ⁴⁸ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 4.
- ⁴⁹ Onslow, *Women*, p. 183.
- ⁵⁰ Onslow, *Women*, pp. 77-79.
- ⁵¹ *JAL*, pp. 43-44.
- ⁵² 'London in January,' *BM*, Feb 1886, p. 251
- ⁵³ Onslow, *Women*, p. 58
- ⁵⁴ 'The Royal Academy' *BM* Jun 1876, pp. 753-69, and 'The Pictures of the Year' *BM* Jun. 1888.
- ⁵⁵ Barbara, Onslow, ' "Humble comments for the Ignorant": Margaret Oliphant's Criticism of Art and Society,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 31:1 Spring 1998, pp. 55-74. Quoted from p. 60.
- ⁵⁶ Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, 'The Professionalisation of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.). *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 231-250. Quoted from p. 241.
- ⁵⁷ 'Religion in Common Life,' *BM*, Feb 1856.
- ⁵⁸ Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing in the Domestic Sphere,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 119-141. Quoted from p. 129.
- ⁵⁹ 'A Royal Idyll' *BM* Sep. 1867, and 'The Queen of the Highlands' *BM* Feb 1868.
- ⁶⁰ 'Elizabeth and Mary' *BM*, Apr 1867; 'The Reign of Queen Anne' February 1880 and her book *The Reign of Queen Anne*, (1894). The Jubilee articles are the following: 'Old Saloon: The Literature of the Last Fifty Years,' *BM* Jun 1887, and " 'Tis Sixty Years Since,' *BM* May, 1897.

- ⁶¹ 'Elizabeth and Mary,' *BM*, Apr 1867, p. 412 and p. 395.
- ⁶² 'Elizabeth and Mary,' *BM*, Apr 1867, pp. 389-90.
- ⁶³ "'Tis Sixty Years Since,' *BM* May, 1897, p. 615
- ⁶⁴ Caine, 'Feminism,' p. 102.
- ⁶⁵ Mermin, *Godiva*, p. 96 and Caine, 'Feminism,' pp. 102-103
- ⁶⁶ Onslow, *Women*, p. 99
- ⁶⁷ Barbara Caine, 'Feminism, Journalism and the Public Debate,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 99-118. Quoted from p. 99.
- ⁶⁸ These public debates were preceded by important events in the history of the women's rights movement. For a good discussion of the debates, see E. K. Helsinger, R. A. Sheets, and Veeder, W.R. *The Woman Question: 1837-1883*. 3 vols. New York: Garland, 1983, Vol. 3. *Social Issues*, Ch. 1
- ⁶⁹ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 382.
- ⁷⁰ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 383.
- ⁷¹ 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 384.
- ⁷² 'The Laws Concerning Women,' *BM* Apr 1856, p. 387.
- ⁷³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 25.
- ⁷⁴ Helsinger et al., *The Woman Question: Social Issues*, Ch.1, esp. pp. 39-55.
- ⁷⁵ Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism*. London: Hutchinson, 1987, chs 2 and 4.
- ⁷⁶ 'The Great Unrepresented,' *BM* Sep 1866, p. 371.
- ⁷⁷ 'The Great Unrepresented,' *BM* Sep 1866, p. 373.
- ⁷⁸ 'Novels,' *BM* Sep 1867, p. 275.
- ⁷⁹ 'Two Ladies,' *BM* Feb 1879, p. 211.
- ⁸⁰ *The Makers of Modern Rome*, London: Macmillan, 1897.
- ⁸¹ 'The Life and Letters of George Eliot,' *ER* Apr 1885, p. 534.
- ⁸² 'Review of *The Subjection of Women*,' *ER* Oct 1869.
- ⁸³ 'Review of *The Subjection of Women*,' *ER* Oct 1869, p. 580.
- ⁸⁴ 'The Rights of Women' *The Spectator*, Mar 7, 1874, p. 301-2. and "Are Women a Represented Class?" *The Spectator*, November 1, 1884, p. 1437. The details of the private correspondence are the following. In a letter to Lady Frances Balfour, Oliphant comments as follows: 'I am not opposed to the suffrage for women, but only indifferent and averse to agitation of all kinds, and hopelessly old-fashioned and out of date.' Huntington Library, MSS, HM 35050, cited by D. J. Trela 'Introduction' to D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant*, p. 14. In 1895, in a letter to her niece Madge, Oliphant comments on the issue of the suffrage: 'I suppose the ideas of the time do get into one's head, however much one may disapprove of them.' Dec 2, 1895, Acc. 5678/4, cited by Merryn Williams, 'Feminist or Antifeminist? Mrs Oliphant and the Woman Question,' in Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant*, p. 165
- ⁸⁵ 'Review of *The Subjection of Women*' *ER* Oct 1869, p. 592.
- ⁸⁶ Mar 7, 1874, *The Spectator*, p. 302. The same irritation with men who question female ability to vote is apparent in a letter to John Blackwood (1876 NLS 4349.) In the letter addressed to John Blackwood, then editor of *Maga*, she refers to a story called 'The Lady Candidate' which pokes fun on the suffragists for their mental weakness. Her comment is rather acerbic on this story: 'This sort of glib nonsense

has by degrees brought me round to the conviction that however indifferent I may be personally to political privileges the system which supposes me incapable of forming a reasonable opinion on public matters is very far from a perfect one.' Cited by Merryn Williams, *Margaret Oliphant*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986, p. 108.

⁸⁷ 'The Grievances of Women,' *Fraser's Magazine*, May, 1880, pp. 698-710. The page references, however, are to the reprint of this article, published in Susan Hamilton, *Criminals, idiots, women, and minors: Victorian writing by women on women* Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995. pp. 231-244. This is the only article in the thesis by Oliphant that I do not cite from the original source.

⁸⁸ The same sentiment of injustice is emphasised in her article of November 1, 1884, *The Spectator*

⁸⁹ 'Review of *The Subjection*' *ER* Oct 1869, p. 593.

⁹⁰ 'Review of *The Subjection*,' *ER* Oct 1869, p. 592.

⁹¹ Cohen, Monica F., *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, p. 14.

⁹² J. S. Clarke, *Margaret Oliphant, 1828-1897: a Bibliography*, St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1986, p. 6.

⁹³ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ 'American Books,' *BM* Oct 1871, p. 442.

⁹⁵ 'Lord Lytton,' *BM* Mar 1873, p. 356.

⁹⁶ Joanne Shattock, 'Work for Women: Margaret Oliphant's Journalism' in Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein, *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000, pp. 165-177. Quoted from p. 168.

⁹⁷ 'New Books' *BM* Jul 1875, p. 82.

⁹⁸ 'New Books,' *BM* Nov 1870, p. 608.

⁹⁹ 'New Books,' *BM* Nov 1873, p. 596.

¹⁰⁰ 'Molière,' *BM* Aug 1876, p. 172.

¹⁰¹ 'New Books,' *BM* Nov 1870, p. 607.

¹⁰² 'New Books,' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 440.

¹⁰³ 'New Books' *BM* Apr 1871, p. 440.

¹⁰⁴ 'New Books,' *BM* Aug 1870, pp. 185-186.

¹⁰⁵ 'New Books' *BM* Sep 1873, p. 614.

¹⁰⁶ 'Modern Novelists – Great and Small,' *BM* May 1855, p. 557.

¹⁰⁷ 'Novels,' *BM* Sept 1867, p. 258.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Sisters Brontë' in *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1897, pp. 3–59.

¹⁰⁹ W. E. Mosier, *Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*, Ph.D Dissertation, Chicago: Northwestern University, 1967, p.19

¹¹⁰ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* May 1887, p. 683 and p. 685.

¹¹¹ Ian Small, *Conditions of Criticism* p. 109.

¹¹² Onslow, *Women*, p. 13.

¹¹³ Onslow, *Women*, p. 56.

¹¹⁴ Onslow, *Women*, p. 96.

¹¹⁵ Onslow, *Women*, p. 133

¹¹⁶ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1980. Quoted from p. 73.

CHAPTER SIX
EPILOGUE

A new ground
Twersky Reimer

Mrs Oliphant thought (and, as I believe, with some justice) that, if freed from pecuniary pressure, she could have rivalled some more successful authors, and possibly have written a novel fit to stand on the same shelf with *Adam Bede*. She resigned her chance of such fame because she wished to send her sons to Eton. It is, of course, clear enough that, if she had sent them to some humbler school, she might have come nearer to combining the two aims, and have kept her family without sacrificing her talents to over-production. But, granting the force of the dilemma, I confess that I honour rather than blame the choice. I take it to be better for a parent to do his (or her) parental duty than to sacrifice the duty to "art" or the demands of posterity.¹

That is Leslie Stephen's assessment of Oliphant's authorial achievement, in an article discussing Southey's letters in the *National Review* in 1899, emphasising the point that Oliphant was mediocre as an author although noble as a mother who 'sacrificed her talents to over- production.' Stephen was not the only critic to evaluate life and art in identical terms, and many critics reviewing Oliphant's *Autobiography* in 1899 drew similar conclusions both about her self-sacrificial motherhood (laudable) and her authorial achievement (limited).

Before one too readily accepts the implications of the reviews that Oliphant's career was a morally outstanding artistic failure, it is however important to remember that they were discussing Oliphant's volume *Autobiography* rather than her life, and that their views of Oliphant's life and art were rooted in a literal or biographical reading of Oliphant's text, which emphasises family and maternal duty, states aesthetic failure and also connects the two by justifying the latter by the former.² On its first publication in 1899, Oliphant's *Autobiography* was widely and sympathetically reviewed and caused a minor literary sensation.³ What struck most commentators about Oliphant's *Autobiography* was the pained nature of the writing: the woman's heroism and the expression of maternal grief. Reviewers also tended to read the *Autobiography* as a *journal intime*, as a document of unmediated self-disclosure and thus an authentic representation of the woman and literary author. The *Quarterly Review*, for instance, although understanding that introspection was a study 'to which [Oliphant] was usually little inclined,' nevertheless saw it as a 'bit of self-criticism and introspection.'⁴ The *Scottish Review* sympathised with the author in her constant struggle with life and appreciated it as a document presenting the 'pure, sincere [...] unselfish' woman, unmediated by literary means.⁵ The *Edinburgh Review* praised the text for 'show[ing] the woman as she was,'⁶ while the *Atlantic*

Monthly emphasised its character as a 'severe and sometimes almost remorseful self-examination.'⁷ The reviewer of *The Academy* praised the document for the honest representation of an Englishwoman's life, and concluded on a high note of praise: it is '[q]uite artless, it has all the sincerity of a woman's talk to herself.'⁸ This interpretation, with its emphasis upon sincerity, self-disclosure, self-analysis and genuineness, was in fact so pervasive that it affected even readers as well-schooled in literary representation as Virginia Woolf: though initially dismissing, in *Three Guineas*, Oliphant's novels 'as a kind of literary prostitution,' Woolf went on to praise the *Autobiography* as a 'most genuine and moving piece of work.'⁹ The honesty of self-disclosure and the reliability of the narrator is also the tacit assumption shared by Oliphant's early biographers, Vineta and Robert Colby and Merryn Williams, who have tended to use the autobiographical text as an authentic source for uncovering the biographical elements in Oliphant's fiction.

What the early readers of the *Autobiography* were unaware of was the highly expurgated nature of the 1899 edition of the text – a well-intentioned but ultimately misleading action by Oliphant's literary executors Denny Oliphant and Annie Coghill. They made two major kinds of change to the original text. As Jay, the editor of the first complete version of the text in 1990 sums it up, their cuts 'were of two sorts, though both might be seen to have their origin in their concern for this womanly image. There were small excisions of barbed comments, potentially embarrassing to the living, that seemed at odds with the qualities of charm and grace privileged in the prefatory account' (ix-x) and on the other hand, they substantially cut down on the outpourings of the maternal grief that introduces three of the four sections of the work.'¹⁰ This process also meant paying heed to the conventions of the more established genre of the autobiography, but they also 'in effect colluded with the constraints imposed upon women and women writers by the cultural assumptions enshrined in the market.'¹¹ Jay's 1990 re-edition of the text reinstated these missing sections.¹² The reinstatement of these sections shifts the emphasis of the text somewhat from the womanly image of the 1899 version to a more complex and simultaneously more painful and more cruel depiction. The expurgation of the *Autobiography* is, however, only one of the factors that undermines the literal validity of the 1899 version. Modern theories of autobiography explicitly challenge

the assumption of sincerity and authenticity in the genre, even if the reader has no reason to question the moving nature of the outpourings of maternal grief in this *Autobiography*. Exploring the complexities of self-representation in the work of nineteenth century woman writers, Nancy K. Miller directly challenges the theoretical possibility of the authenticity of *any* autobiographical writing and suggests that '[d]espite the identity between the "I" of authorship and the "I" of the narration, and the pacts of sincerity, reading these lives [of French woman autographs Miller discusses] is rather like shaking hands with one's gloves on.' [58]¹³ Then she goes on to propose an 'intratextual practice of interpretation,' which relies on the matrix of fabulation: this has its function in 'both the autobiography and the fiction.' [60] This matrix of fabulation, in George Sand's case for example, is 'the structure through which Sand deals with the problems of origin and identity,' [60] and suggests a reading which regards the fiction and non-fiction and autobiography of women writers 'in their status as text.' [60]

This theoretical insight had been applied to Oliphant's *Autobiography* even before it was explicitly articulated by Miller. The fact that the authorial and maternal self described in the *Autobiography* can and should be regarded as parts of the same textual continuum as Oliphant's other texts was emphasised as early as 1967 by Mosier who considered the *Autobiography* one of her 'better fictional efforts:' the fictional representation of a woman writer who 'had achieved the limited best of which she was capable.'¹⁴ The fact that the author was a *literary* woman rather than just a simple writing Niobe is also evident in the recurrent statements in the text that she is writing 'a story' [87] and even the interpretation of maternal grief is evoked via literary references: after the death of her daughter Maggie, she invokes Tennyson, whose complex model in 'In Memoriam' now helps her to understand her plight, while after the death of her last surviving child Cecco, she turns to Archbishop Tate's biography to find 'not comfort but fellowship.' [84]

Yet Miller's 'matrix of fabulation' can be used in another sense as well. For Miller's example – the work of George Sand – the 'matrix of fabulation' is the structure, while for Oliphant's work, it is not a structure but provides themes of female subject positions on which she elaborates both in her fiction and non-fiction as well as in her *Autobiography*. The autobiographical 'I' of the narrative – the

heroine of her own text – runs the gamut of various female subject positions, from daughterhood through wifehood and widowhood (always seeing herself as part of a social and familial network), while simultaneously she also fulfils the role of the writing woman (whose authorship is rooted in ideas of familial and domestic authorship). The fact that it is a first-person narrative from youth to maturity and called *Autobiography* may easily mislead us, as it inevitably generates associations with the genre of *Bildungsroman* and its assumptions of self-revelation and self-development in a psychologised idiom. Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century, there were many first-person fictional narratives, from *Jane Eyre* to *Miss Margaret Maitland*, some of which easily lend themselves to ‘self- developmental’ readings. However, psychological, self-reflective elaborations upon her own (or the narrator’s) *Bildung* are just about as scarce here as in Oliphant’s fiction in general. The very notion of progress, essential to the concept of *Bildung*, is also blantly absent from the text. This is evidenced by the structure of the *Autobiography*. Unlike more traditional, sequential examples of self-writing, the *Autobiography* consists of two parallel texts: one is the story of story-telling, while the longer, extended sections can be called the more traditional plot. These two simultaneous structural units are divided into four chronological sections (1864, 1885, 1890, 1894), each beginning with a present-tense section (mostly the outpouring of maternal grief) and continuing with the actual record of the past. But the halting structure of the narrative also means a constant return to the same events, either in both, parallel narratives, or within one of them. The different female subject positions, therefore, are not analysed as stages of the heroine’s developing self. Rather, they are mapped onto a life not conceived teleologically. Thus each role is examined via a group of different characters in the same position, which allows the reader to regard the mothers, daughters, married women and authors not as individuals but as allegories: types, models or ideologies, suggesting the same kind of sociological interest as the one that characterises Oliphant’s journalism.

The representation of these subject positions is rooted in the textual practices elaborated in Oliphant’s previous work, and is also related to contemporary Victorian cultural and fictional models and stereotypes. It is both a synthesis and a subversion, as the text returns to Oliphant’s representation of women in different

subject positions in earlier texts but, because the bulk of the text was written in the last decade of Oliphant's life, it offers an opportunity of looking back at her earlier positions from a more mature and perhaps more disillusioned vantage point. The correspondences between the earlier and later, subverted representations of the same themes – domestic and literary women – suggest perhaps a larger dose of authorial freedom, since the text, although highly fictionalised, is nevertheless not limited by the rules of representation governing three-deckers as well as Oliphant's development in terms of a loss of affinity with idyllic representations.

In order to facilitate my pragmatic as opposed to psychological reading, and to avoid beguiling references to an evolving emotional life or to a literary artist's apologia for her artistic failure, the heroine of the narrative will be referred to as 'M' rather than 'Oliphant' and the *Autobiography* as 'the text.' M is an independent literary artist who narrates the story of her own domestic life as well as her essentially domestic artistic practice, from girlhood in the middle of the century to mature authorship at its end.

The *Autobiography* charts closely the personal development of a young middle-class woman from a sociable girlhood to maturity and the loneliness of old age. The fact that there are specifically female selves in the text has been given some critical attention.¹⁵ Some critics have read it with an eye to its position in the canon of female autobiography, while others have considered its representation of women in different subject positions, in particular as a maternal subject.¹⁶ Linda Ruth Williams, committed to a psychoanalytical orientation, reads the text as a 'uniquely psychoanalytic [...] trauma' of loss after maternal loss, emphasising the fact that the *Autobiography* describes the repeated traumas of the death of Oliphant's close family.¹⁷ Linda Peterson's early reading of the *Autobiography* 'Audience and the Autobiographer's Art: An Approach to the Autobiography of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant' considers three aspects of the work: 'the reasons for writing an autobiography; the version of the self presented in it; the rhetorical strategy employed to present that self' [159], and of these three perspectives, she focuses on the representation of the maternal self in the text.¹⁸ Twersky Reimer's account of Oliphant's *Autobiography* also highlights maternity as its central theme and metaphor.¹⁹ Her analysis of motherhood in the text emphasises the 'maternal

isolation' [211] as well as the 'centrality and interrelatedness of birth and death in maternal experience.' [215]

That private or maternal readings of the *Autobiography* abound is obviously rooted in a number of textual factors. Partly, the self-declared identity of the narrator and the dominant idiom of the text are maternal rather than professional. Maternity and maternal loss as the main inspiration behind the writing is evident in the structure of the work: three of its four main sections (Section One dated 1864, Section Three 1890, Section Four 1894) were inspired by the deaths of M's children. Each begins with the bitter expressions of maternal bereavement, while within the sections the recollections of the past also begin with the description of maternal experience – partly her own, partly her mother's. This is the reason why Linda Peterson in her early writing on the *Autobiography* suggested that the time scheme of the narrative is a maternal time scheme, and that the text is primarily a mother's story and only secondarily that of a writer.²⁰ The formative force of maternal bereavement is complemented by the careful deployment of the narrative tradition of the domestic memoir – a genre that Oliphant reviewed in her series on *Autobiographies* in *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1881 and 1883. Most of these memoirs were written not by prominent women – only Lucy Hutchinson and Alice Thornton were wives of aristocratic politicians in the seventeenth century – but by women whose fortunes were subordinated to the defining events of male careers, and their memoirs are of family memories, emphasising 'family values and network of familial relationships.'

²¹ Oliphant praises Lucy Thornton's descriptions of her parents for 'all the affectionate panegyric that was general those days.'²² These domestic memoirs describe personal attitudes, family events, childhood, domestic life and often the glorification of male achievement. Apart from the latter, many of these features are present in the *Autobiography*: the text abounds in anecdotal memories of children, maternal affection on M's mother's part for M's brother Frank, and brief analyses of love affairs, and a detailed analysis of the numerous personal failings, of M's children. On the other hand, it is significant that the Italian revolution that took place when Oliphant and her family lived in Florence – arguably the most dramatic historical event of Oliphant's lifetime – only merits reference in passing as a 'popular

festa,’ evaluated solely from the perspective of family welfare. [71, italics in the original]

Bildungsroman with a difference

In the private, domestic narrative of M, the domestic female one recognises the earlier, well-established paradigms representing domestic women: the woman in her full maternal and domestic authority, the *femme sole* with her full domestic authority and sometimes also her maternal authority, the representation of frustrated conjugal relations and the fulfilling life of spinsters in alternative domesticities. The process of biographical representation starts with the representation of the young M, who, in the course of the plot, passes through the subject positions of daughter, young mother married with young children, and subsequently the widowed mother in sole charge of her children and of her adopted family. The fullest representation of the paradigmatic married-woman-with-children with full-fledged maternal authority is Mrs W, M’s mother, but the plethora of references to M herself and the representations of other mothers, usually minor characters in the text, indicate that mothers are central to the emotional well-being of these households, and motherhood is a state of ceaseless industry. The representation of M’s mother both confirms and challenges the model established in *The Athelings* in the 1850s. She is the industrious core of the W(ilson) household: active, affectionate (though not expressively so) and powerful: she ‘never seemed to sit down in the strange, little, warm, bright picture, but to hover about the table pouring out tea, supplying everything [...] her eyes liquid and bright with love.’ [18-19] Maternal affection is consistently expressed by maternal labour. M remembers the manifestation of maternal affection on her mother’s part:

I was the child of her age – not her old age, but the sentiment was the same. She had lost three children one after another [...] My clothes were all made by her tender hands, finer and more beautifully worked than ever child’s clothes were; my undergarments fine linen and trimmed with little delicate laces.’ [20]

In the portrait of Mrs W as the ‘devoted, nurturing, and all-giving’ mother, one also sees an idealised portrait of M herself as a young mother, in a representation in which, although expressions of affection for her children are even less verbal, the dominant theme is still maternal love, expressed through the unceasing, gentrified,

maternal domestic practices of genteel labour: the recurrent frock-making is intertwined with novel-making.²³ Motherhood is not only a state of physical industriousness, but it is a state responsible for passing on the cultural inheritance, as becomes evident in M's reference to Jane Welsh Carlyle: 'I understand the Carlyles, both he and she, by means of my mother as perhaps few people can do.' [22] Knowledge is passed on through maternal mediation.

Other older, domestic maternal subjects, with a full range of authority, reinforce the image of Mrs W. Another Mrs Wilson, M's great-aunt, who was 'all culture, intellect, improvement of the mind' [34] and provides maternal guidance that is responsible for her son's professional success as 'Professor of something which meant chemistry.' [33] Motherhood is represented as the idyllic state and status, in a way that owes something to Mrs Atheling's watchful control over her children and their moral (and career) guidance.

While domestic motherhood is a state of authority and permanent busyness for M as well as for her mother, conjugal and heterosexual affections in the text of the *Autobiography* are never discussed in detail. Despite the fact that in the early sections of the text M is a young woman, both the representation of her love affair with the lost lover and her emotional investment in the marriage appear stifled. Of the idyll and the disappointment between M and her first lover J. Y., M gives a very short, detached, summary: 'He cannot have been at all clever, and I was rather.' [24] The reticence is even more characteristic of her representation of her affection for her husband Frank. This is perhaps an interesting point of convergence between fiction and autobiography, for it might support Sanders's observation about the female autobiographer's reticence about 'those areas of life that we tend to see as the most important,' but it is also true that heterosexual affection or 'sensual passion' is a marginal element in Oliphant's oeuvre as a whole.²⁴ M also claims to have taken a 'man's view of mortal affairs' in terms of considering 'marrying and giving in marriage' as being of secondary importance. [10] This distanced view of heterosexual affections also explains her barbed comment on her dead son Cecco whose apparent lack of involvement in affairs of love – a 'boyish inclination towards a pretty girl' – rather pleases M. [81] The combination of literary reticence with a confessed indifference to love affairs also explains why she sees her marriage as

having a very pragmatic, practical and dynastic purpose: that of rebuilding the family fortune.

Not only the toning-down of heterosexual emotions, but also the representation of coupledness and conjugality conforms to the models established in Oliphant's writing in the 1870s and 1880s. The unthreatened idyll and the representation of conjugal masculinity as described in *The Athelings* in the 1850s – although Mr Atheling is a somewhat ineffectual agent, he is a supporting male – seems unique in her oeuvre, and a stance she quickly reconsidered. By the 1870s the idyll had lost its validity, and the portrait of M's father recalls images from Oliphant's more disillusioned fiction, as regards both his indifference and his improvidence. Characteristically, Mr W 'sat passive, taking no notice' [37] and his character as a 'wet blanket' recalls the phrasing used to describe Lord Stanton's indifference towards his wife in her novel *Young Musgrave* (1883). Ironically, though perhaps predictably, her husband Frank remains as much on the margins of the plot (of the family narrative) as was the dim and distant father and, indeed, her brothers, about whom she speaks with affection and sisterly adoration, but whose approbation is routinely undercut by references to their moral weaknesses and career failures. This leaves the reader with the impression that their main role in the life of women is that of generating conflict rather than promoting family welfare and fortune. Although her husband Frank appears more willing to work than her father and her brothers, he nevertheless clearly fails to satisfy the idealised version of domestic masculinity. The narrator's critique of Frank's temperamental improvidence and insensitivity to the family interest are all the more evident in her reference to the aimless and unnecessary travels in Italy forced upon them by the dying man ('But Frank had set his heart upon it, and there was nothing more to be said' p. 73), and even more in the reference to his death 'quite, quite free from anxiety', which again recalls the comparable motive of *The Two Marys*, where Reverend Perivale leaves his pregnant wife unprovided for. [78]

The motifs of male improvidence and male indifference were crucial in her journalism and fiction in the 1870s, and while the *Autobiography* refuses to blame the male character openly for these shortcomings – rather generously ascribing them to Frank's ill-health – nevertheless, the character of wifehood that emerges from the

narrative is rather isolated and not the full-fledged idyll. In other instances, coupledom is rarely represented as a state of continuous blessing. The focus, however, is not on emotional imbalance, but rather on the absence of equality and functionality. The publisher Blackett's marriage is bizarrely asymmetrical and unequal, deriving from the tension between Mrs Blackett's vast intellectual superiority – she was 'very much more clever than her husband' – and equally vast domestic inferiority [100]; while the marriage of the Carlyles and that of the Fawcetts is represented with tenderness, though in these cases their respectable maturity is more than once emphasised. Her comment on the marriage of her friends in Rome, Robert and Geddie McPherson, and on her brother Frank's marriage to Jeanie, reveals the same wry condescension: while they may produce those 'commonplace happinesses' she mentioned in her journalism, they are deeply dysfunctional because they seem unable to fulfil the pragmatic goals of marriage. Indeed, though it is difficult to find any open exhortation against that or a passionate condemnation of Frank's obvious indifference and carelessness, there is none the less a subtle critique of the institution of marriage and of male improvidence.

In contrast with the customarily disillusioned representation of conjugality, the joys and usefulness of spinsterhood and the joy over the liberation from heterosexual norms of behaviour are constantly, though subtly, celebrated. Femininity is not a question of biological motherhood, as evidenced by her comment on her daughter, Maggie. Maggie, even in childhood, possesses motherly qualities: she is as 'sweet as a little mother' [4] and she subsequently describes Maggie's loss as that of a potential homemaker. [5] On the other hand, female friends are just as capable of providing human fellowship as marital relations. The main characteristic of the representation of the mature M's life is in terms of sociability: the bulk of the second part of the text is a somewhat anecdotal, picturesque representation of a Scotswoman's adventures on the Continent and in literary society. In this universe of sociability, single female friends dominate, just as in her earlier, fictional representations of energetic, domesticated spinsters. Characters like Miss Blackwood or her maternal friend Jane Welsh Carlyle are not only discussed with more affection and appreciation than male relatives, but a very close reading of the text also reveals that her post-Frank life is characterised by an effort to create alternative domestic

structures. These alternative domestic structures operate both on a personal and a professional level, yet the difference is not especially relevant because of the conflation of professional and semi-professional ties. Miss Blackwood, for instance, stayed with her for two months; Geraldine McPherson visited her at Ealing, culminating in the trip to Rome by ‘the little party of women,’ [107] and, her daughter’s death, she continued her travels on the Continent with an entourage consisting of her children and maidservants – treated according to the rules of moral economy rather than cash-nexus. Indeed, it is particularly revealing to look at the domestic arrangements of other characters – adult friends – in the narrative. Energetic and lively Miss Blackwood and Mrs Duncan Stewart, with their intensive engagement with other people’s lives, are the prime exemplars of the single (widowed) woman’s full and sociable life, showing the potential fulfilment of supposedly solitary individuals. Although the comparative virtues of marriage and alternative households are never spelled out, a subtle critique of marriage and the appreciation of the rewarding nature of female friendship dominate M’s post-Frank life.

While the text of the *Autobiography* appears to be a glorified summary of female subject positions elaborated in previous texts, it also offers at the same time a revised version of the same themes. For one thing, the original maternal role of Mrs Atheling is substantially expanded by introducing another kind of female agency: M’s mother seems to be solely responsible for launching her daughter in literary society. At the same time, the subverted critique of maternal authority is most evident in its depiction as being ineffectual. In *The Athelings* – in the *Urtext* of maternal authority in Oliphant’s oeuvre – Mrs Atheling’s maternal guidance of her daughters amongst the perils of marriage and friends was both successful and unchallenged. This was partly rooted in the fact that moral danger was purely hypothetical, and in the fact that her children allowed themselves to be moulded obediently. Maternal moral guidance and authority in the *Autobiography* are tested by a real and very serious threat that needs to be averted: M’s brother, falling again ‘into his old vice and debt and misery’ [26], is obviously a drunkard and profligate, and despite the exercise of female competence by M and her mother, their efforts are only partially successful, as no female agency can act against a similarly powerful

male passivity, indolence and moral weakness. Moreover, the limits of maternal authority and the limits of the good female influence are also evidenced in the way in which the mature M looks back upon the upbringing of her sons. Writing from close to the deathbed of Cyril, who had fallen victim to the same vice as her brother, M makes a pained yet ruthless assessment of his life: 'His life has failed, his future in this world was without hope.' [44] Cecco's own independence is more of a success in terms of career, or (at least) his personal moral weakness is not that obvious, it is rather his ill-health that inhibits the realisation of M's hopes of professional achievement for him. Nevertheless, the professional failure of both of her sons – whether due to physical or moral sickness or a combination of the two – suggests the limitations of M's maternal authority and its efficacy. Indeed, as Twersky Reimer suggests 'the pathos of the autobiography lies in her struggle to make sense of the maternal efforts of a lifetime in the light of their impoverished results.' [206]

Another area in which it is possible to demonstrate the journey Oliphant made between the 1870s and her representation of the same themes in the 1890s is in the issue of the brother-sister household. Earlier, as evidenced by *Young Musgrave*, this was an idyllic site of harmonious and emotionally rewarding ties and collaborative working relationships. By the time of the *Autobiography*, however, it is the site of disillusionment. The alternative, brother-sister household is set up by M and her widowed brother and children. As the brief references to her involvement in her own and in her surrogate children's life and intellectual development show, it is a site of fully exercised maternal or surrogate maternal authority. Mostly through unceasing labour, M always 'maintained the cheerful household fire.' [137] Yet this alternative domesticity in no way provides the human companionship so openly celebrated in her earlier work. Rather, it is the replication of M's family, with however M's shadowy father's place taken by M's equally shadowy brother in the background, who 'looked at me as a kind of stepmother to his children, and we no longer thought alike on almost any subject: he had drifted one way and I another.' [132] The fact that her brother Frank's society is as burdensome for her as was that of men in general in her previous domestic structures is revealing of Oliphant's mature experience and her discarding of illusions about the mutually rewarding character of one type of surrogate domesticity.

Künstlerroman with a difference

While it would be tempting to read Oliphant's memoir as an individual, personal and domestic record, and to accept that motherhood – the dominant identity of the narrator – erases other, competing elements, authorship is an equally important topos, metaphor and theme in the *Autobiography*, and its representation is governed by textual structures and tropes just as it is in Oliphant's earlier work.²⁵ The aspect of the *Autobiography* focusing upon the development of the author has attracted much critical attention, and critics have often pointed out how Oliphant's attempts at reconciling family and professional responsibilities led to artistic compromise and eventual failure. Mermin suggests that Oliphant's commitment to maternal or surrogate maternal duty 'may have empowered her as a woman [but] she felt that it enfeebled her as a writer.'²⁶ In other words, these readings often offer elaborations on the well-known and familiar analysis of what Peterson calls the 'cultural predicament of the woman writer,' emphasising the inherent tensions in her situation.²⁷ Without necessarily wanting to deny the existence of these tensions, however, it is also important to point out that these voices not only accept the assessment of Oliphant's output as (generally) inferior, but also accept that this inferiority was rooted in the absence of an ideal environment, which hindered the production of aesthetically pleasing work. Instead, it might be suggested that Oliphant deployed a model of literary authorship – one that does not reveal the tensions between domesticity and authorship, but tries 'to resolve them ideologically.'²⁸ Indeed, if we accept Twersky Reimer's insight that Oliphant acknowledges 'a gap between her story and men's stories of their experience, [and she] hints at a new ground upon which her own story might be built' – then this new ground could precisely be the reconceptualisation of literary authorship.'²⁹

In order to make this argument, one first needs to set apart those representations of art and artists with which Oliphant refused to identify. Firstly, she did not intend to analyse the profession of authorship in the manner adopted by Harriet Martineau and Anthony Trollope in their respective autobiographies, or by George Eliot in her letters (these became public knowledge from J. W. Cross's

hagiographic account of Eliot's life in *The Life of George Eliot* (1883).³⁰ The previous chapter discussed Oliphant's analysis of Martineau's and George Eliot's authorship in her journalism, (*Blackwood's*, 1877 and *Edinburgh Review*, 1885). Suffice it to say here that she condemned Martineau's version for her representation of authorship as achieved in what Oliphant saw as masculine terms of professional progress and success. She disliked the image of Eliot emerging from the Cross book as a literary author whose authorship arose in complete isolation from the intellectual, familial and social context. In the text of the *Autobiography* it is the authorship of Trollope and Eliot that attracts her particular disfavour. Indeed, in the genesis of the *Autobiography*, Eliot's role is inevitable: the Cross-biography is credited with the 'second major bout of self-inscription.'³¹ As the infamous reference to Eliot's 'mental greenhouse' in the *Autobiography* indicates, she appeared particularly annoyed about Eliot's dissociation from the common ties of humanity. Trollope's authorship was a similar issue. On its appearance his *Autobiography* drew much adverse criticism for its anti-Romantic tendency of representing art as a trade and writing as a mechanical, industrialised, and clock-driven activity.³² This particular concept of authorship may easily have claimed Oliphant's professional sympathy, and indeed, the perception of the similarity between their positions is evident in her obituary of Trollope in *Good Words*.³³ However, at the outset of the *Autobiography*, she insisted on distancing herself from Trollope's writing: she rejected the 'fashion of self-explanation,' [15] and it was only later on in the text, in a reference to Symonds, that she elaborated on the nature of the difference between her attitude and theirs: 'I have been reading the life of Mr. Symonds, and it makes me almost laugh [...] to think of the strange difference between this prosaic little narrative, all about the facts of life so simple as mine, and his elaborate self-discussions.' [99] What Oliphant found difficult to accept about Trollope's self-representation as an artist was his supposed intensive engagement with his literary characters: it appeared to be just the kind of self-aggrandizement which she (and most female authors) disliked. Taking the reference to and analysis of Eliot and Trollope together, it is easy to see that she wanted to dissociate herself from both the concept of isolation (Eliot) as well as the self-aggrandisement (Trollope) implicit in those representations of authorship.

Instead of these self-aggrandising efforts behind authorship, Oliphant experimented with a different interpretation of writing, and this is perhaps what Sanders interprets as ‘deprofessionalising the act of authorship.’³⁴ This alternative interpretation of writing was also rooted in existing models. The literary representation of the trade of the author had been a subject of interest at least since the mid-century, from earlier fictional representations such as Thackeray’s *Pendennis* (1848)³⁵ and Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850), to later representations in the 1870s and 1880s, when it was discussed mostly in letters, lectures or literary essays, and often in the memoirs of literary women.³⁶ These different forms of self-writing were a particularly important site of discussing authorship. As Linda Peterson points out in her article ‘Women Writers and Self Writing,’ the two major traditions in the self-representation of female artists in the nineteenth century – the Victorianised reworkings of the eighteenth century *chronicles scandaleuses* and the domestic memoirs – together created a model which attempted to negotiate ‘the plot of authorship’ with the plot of domesticity.³⁷ This model deployed an essentially domesticated model of female professionalism, seeing domestic womanhood and art not as separate but on the same continuum, and this model derived women’s art from a linear family tradition of their family of origin as well as from the circumstances of their family of destination. This tradition of the domesticated model of female professionalism (‘literary domesticity’ as Gagnier would say) was also embraced by nineteenth-century female autobiographers, who thereby naturalised their own artistic achievement.³⁸ The womanhood-cum-artistry project was not only pervasive but also very successful.

How did Oliphant deploy these traditions in her writing? Oliphant was intimately familiar with the family tradition-artistry combination, as shown in her reviews in the 1870s and 1880s in *Blackwood’s* where she discussed the self-representation of her contemporaries such as Mary Howitt, Sara Coleridge, Anna Jameson, and Fanny Kemble. These authors emphasise their own achievement as part of the family achievement, as in the cases of Kemble and Coleridge, or they represent careers as motivated by maternal concerns, as in the case of Howitt. The emphasis in these narratives, Oliphant argues, is not the modern (or masculine) definition of a woman’s art as establishing a conflict between the domestic and the

professional; rather, the emphasis is the continuity between domestic subject positions, role and work, and artistic achievement. In these memoirs, the professional work of the artist and the actress grows naturally out of domestic duty: female artists are represented as obedient daughters of the family, who naturally and with domestic support grow into public artists, whose earnings serve domestic needs and whose careers are the outcome of collaborative domestic effort.

The representation of M's artistry in the *Autobiography* is, in turn, comparable with the ways in which female artists' lives are described in Oliphant's earlier journalism and in her other fiction during the period when most of the relevant sections of the *Autobiography* were written: between 1885 and 1894. But it is important to note the dates here: Oliphant provided her most intensive theorising of female artistry in the 1870s and the early 1880s, in her series 'New Books' and in her other series of (mostly women's) 'Autobiographies' in the early 1880s. Her perspective upon these issues in the *Autobiography* (whose relevant section was written between 1885 and 1894) reflects her more mature views: she not only recapitulates her former ideas on authorship, but also develops and subverts these perspectives. Read in this light the *Autobiography* can be seen to provide a succinct analysis of female authorial practice, an analysis of domesticated and intersubjective authorship. Ultimately, it points at the difficulties of representing commercial and critical success.

The concept of authorship as a domesticated act is particularly clear in the section pertaining to the early authorship of M, in the 1885 section. The naturalness of authorship is characterised by a variety of factors: its abstract origins are defined as a natural, romantically irrepressible force, which forces M to sit down and start the next novel when she had hardly finished the previous one. She explains the genesis of *Caleb Field*, one of her early novels: 'I began another book called "Caleb Field," about the Plague in London, the very night I had finished "Margaret Maitland."' [30] Indeed, the concept of genius and its implications were common currency in references to female authorship: as Penny Boumelha argues, 'the concept of innate genius enables the representation of achievement without conscious ambition.'³⁹ The naturalness of the act of writing for the female author is a recurrent motive in the text. As she comments in 1885, 'I have written because it gave me pleasure, it came

natural to me, because it was like talking or breathing, besides the big fact that it was necessary for me to work for the children.’[14] Later, in the section written in 1894, she reiterates that her ‘stories in the making of them’ are as natural as story reading is for other people. [118] And of course the very private, domestic and natural impulse behind the very conception of the *Autobiography* is also relevant here, as she makes it explicit that the writing of the text is attributable to maternal grief and the search for consolation after the death of her children.

Although her genius is intangible, the physical circumstances of authorship are none the less placed on a material continuum with her domestic life: writing a novel itself appears to be indistinguishable from other household tasks, and not ‘an occasion for self-indulgent emotional self-exploration.’⁴⁰ Given that story-making is a group project rather than an individual enterprise, it is all the more obvious that her writing enjoys the approbation of her family. The impulse behind writing her first novel – usually so memorable for any author – is again discussed in terms of personal and domestic naturalness. Her authorship has its roots in the romantic adolescent need to find consolation for disappointment in her lover – a lover who has gone over the Atlantic but whose identity is otherwise wholly irrelevant. Intellectual history is conspicuously absent. This fact might be the consequence of the female author’s lack of self-conscious ambition, but also it is rooted in Oliphant’s reservations about self-aggrandisement as articulated *à propos* of Martineau’s writing.⁴¹ The following paragraph, in part already cited in Chapter Five for its literal, autobiographical value, succinctly summarises the dual impulse which inspires her to the act of writing and which make it so natural for the domestic woman:

In the time of my depression and sadness my mother had a bad illness, and I was her nurse, or at least attendant. [...] I had no liking then for needlework, a taste which I developed afterwards, so I took to writing. There was no particular purpose in my beginning except this, to secure some amusement and occupation for myself while I sat at my mother’s bedside. [24-25]

Again: writing is not defined as a fundamentally intangible activity; it is rather genderised, material labour. Writing in M’s life takes the place of shirt-making in the lives of others. Again, it is interesting to revert to her authorship in contrast with that of Jane Austen:

Miss Austen, I believe, wrote in the same way, and very much for the same reason; but at her period the natural flow of life took another form. The family were half ashamed to have it known that she was not just a young lady like the others, doing her embroidery. [30]

This difference may be seen as simply an historical difference between the two women's authorial practice, in that Austen's work preceded Oliphant's by forty years, more than a generation before the rise in the prestige of novel writing. Yet it may easily have class implications also: while shirtmaking would have been an activity appropriate for Oliphant, who came from a lower middle class background (the breeding-ground of dressmakers), Austen's far more genteel family would have frowned upon an activity with the same class connotations. Private and innocent authorship manifests itself in a genre suited to the self-educated gentlewoman: M writes a novel about an angelic elder sister grieving over the loss of her lover; the next major novel *Miss Margaret Maitland* (which is also written on some unidentified impulse) similarly follows in the same domestic groove, and her subsequent juvenile novels of romantic and domestic character are also supported by her life experience: for example *Katie Stewart*, a 'love-tale' [36], is based on family anecdotes. M, still in her girlhood, writes a number of novels under the same circumstances, on a natural continuum with her other domesticated activities, in a way that does not deny her essential social relatedness and domestic daughterhood.

The natural act of writing is thus turned into published authorship, and the act of publishing her first novel also takes place as a collaborative domestic effort. M is sufficiently aware of the industry of literature to know that the publication – 'the extraordinary epoch' – is the real making of the book, and it is precisely the collaborative domestic aspects that help assuage the perils of earning and of publication: her earnings are used for the benefit of her family's welfare, and the public exposure resulting from publication is gently defused by its domestic reception and evaluation. [26] She was 'half-amused at the thought that it was *me* who was being thus discussed in the newspapers.' [28-9, italics in the original]. Familial sociability remains the dominant feature of her mature authorship, although it obviously involves more intensive participation in the professional world of the marketplace. Just as her literary labour was sociable rather than solitary ('I took my share in the conversation, going on all the same with my story, the little group of imaginary persons,' p. 30), her assertion of the same fact somewhat later suggests

that for her, writing as represented on a continuum with domestic life is not a circumstantial exception; rather, it is the natural course of female writing.

The domestic and communal nature of the book-making enterprise is further asserted by the fact that despite her evolving identity as a literary artist with an independent and autonomous intellectual life, M's relations with other domestic subjectivities never become antagonistic. At the outset the role of her mother and of her brother Frank in the creative process was undeniable: 'They were part of me, and I of them, and we were all in it.' [29] She is launched in the world of literature through familial mediation, and after this beginning, her circulation in literary life continues on the same familial-communal continuum that had already made possible her authorship of novels and that had also enabled her to be a published author. She is introduced to the circle of minor men and women of letters, such as the Halls, the Howitts, Rosa Bonheur, and Miss Muloch. These introductions take place mostly through her husband, rather than being attributable to an individualistic, self- or fame-seeking effort, preserving even the sociable aspect of authorship within the domain of activity natural to the married middle class woman. In all of these families, art and domesticity typically appear on the same continuum, as the couples are very often literary couples or from the artist community, as in the case of the Howitts and the Halls. The collaborative domesticity of authorship in the author's life is further emphasised by the internal arrangement of the rooms in her own house: the 'drawing-room proper' is used by men for their studios, while women have the 'little drawing room,' [44] suggesting that neither are male artists separated from their domestic environment, nor do writing women pursue their art in a location other than the family parlour, the normal venue of domestic sociability where the social, domestic, and characteristically feminine money-earning activity of shirtmaking, too, might be pursued. Indeed, it is worth bearing in mind that in the early and mid-nineteenth century, as pointed out by Davidoff and Hall, '[p]rofessional men had little practical motivation to separate family life from those business premises which were neither dirty, nor noisy and which did not involve the social threat of a large workforce.'⁴² Not only did doctors have their surgeries in their own house, but this kind of domestic-professional arrangement also suited the needs of those artist-writer couples who provided the social milieu for M and her husband.

A particularly salient point is M's literary and financial success in this narrative which has so far emphasised the creative phase of literary work rather than the book that is the end-product of the process. The commercial and critical success of her writing, too, she defines in distinctly feminine terms: never as a means of securing economic independence *from* her family, but as a means to secure independence *for* them. In the sections describing the period up to 1861 there is very little reference to the commercialisation of her writing at all, except for the comment that 'I was, of course, writing steadily all the time, getting about £400 for a novel, and already, of course, being told that I was working too fast, and producing too much.' [63] It is noticeable that despite the intensive output of the real-life Oliphant, there is hardly any philological reference to her novels by title, except once to *Zaidee* [39] and that is in the context of a conversation rather than part of the analysis of her published authorship. In fact, other authors' publications appear to her of more interest than her own. A quite insignificant book, Mr Fullom's *Marvels of Science*, is mentioned by title.[40] This might be an indication of her modesty, or cultural constraints, but more importantly, it registers a difference between her own practice and the practice of what she identified as a masculinist tendency in Martineau's autobiography: to distinguish herself by public success and popularity. Oliphant, in the early sections of the text, is tellingly silent about the financial remuneration or critical appreciation of her writing.

In 1894, halfway through the narrative and at the end of the first three sections, there is a dramatic change in tone. From this point onwards, the work gently yet determinedly takes a more public direction, towards her acquaintance with more prominent authors, and anecdotal meetings with the Carlyles and the Montalemberts. The text becomes more a reminiscence of a professional literary life. This shift has attracted considerable critical attention and has usually been attributed to the changing audience of the narrative.⁴³ It is true that the *Autobiography*, which begins in 1864 with her daughter Maggie's death, was intended for M's surviving children, Cyril and Cecco. In the course of the narrative, however, Cyril dies, in 1890 – an event which provides the stimulus for the writing the third section of the text – and finally, in 1894, Cecco dies as well, giving rise to the fourth section. Cecco's death alters the rhetorical project of the narrative irreversibly: while the narrative was

originally addressed to her surviving child(ren) and could therefore have remained private, now it is to become a commercial publication and must therefore appeal the commercial market. This change is so emphatic that it is made twice. First, the narrator confesses:

I feel that I must try to change the tone of this record. It was written for my boys, for Cecco in particular. Now they will never see it – unless, indeed, they are permitted, being in a better place, to know what is going on here. I used to feel that Cecco would use his discretion, – that most likely he would not print any of this at all, for he did not like publicity, and would have thought his mother's story of her life sacred; but now everything is changed, and I am now going to try to remember more trivial things, the incidents that sometimes amuse me when I look back upon them, not merely the thread of my life. [86-87]

In a section written a few days later, she returns to the same issue, reiterating the fact that it was only an external expedient that forced her to change the tone of the record from a *journal intime* to a more public record; at the same time she muses on the low prestige of the newly-started narrative.

How strange it is to me to write all this, with the effort of making a light reading of it, and putting in anecdotes that will do to quote in the papers, and make the book sell! It is a sober narrative enough, heaven knows! and when I wrote it for my Cecco to read it was all very different, but now I am doing it consciously for the public, with the aim (no evil aim) of leaving a little more money for Denny, I feel all this to be so vulgar, so common, so unnecessary, as if I were making pennyworths of myself. [95]

Despite the narrator's emphatic claims that the main reason for the change in the tone is the death of its intended audience – thereby effectively denying the possibility of the memoir remaining in the family circle as it had purported to be and forcing the memoir into the commercial public domain – the plot of M's life also reaches a point of undeniable change; in other words, both the *sujet* and the *fabula* change in the same direction, reinforcing the earlier point about the circular structure of the text. Perhaps coincidentally but possibly due to some later, (self-)editorial effort, by the beginning of 1894, which is the year of Cecco's death, the narrator has reached the crucial date of 1861 in the plot of M's life. 1861 is the date of the death of M's husband, which inevitably turns M, the literary author, into a female householder and the only earner in the family: M becomes the mother in the marketplace, conflating the roles of the mother and the provider, a role necessarily more public than the

earlier one. The surprising fact is, however, that her authorship remains on exactly the same domestic and intersubjective continuum as before. Primarily, the physical act of writing is represented on the same undivided continuum with other aspects of life as before. As she says, 'I worked very hard all the time, I scarcely know how, for I was always the subject to an irruption of merry neighbours bent on some ramble.' [105] But aside from the physical continuum of writing and other activities, exemplified by the notable reference to the 'second drawing room' of the house where her entire writing life took place, there is none the less a subtle change in the representation. We see that now Oliphant sets out to examine the project of intersubjective authorship on a public plane.

In part, this project takes place in the context of her relationship with publishers, which are never described in businesslike terms. 'John Blackwood [...] with that curious kind of intimacy which is created by a publisher's knowledge of all one's affairs' was already a friend, and her relationship with Henry Blackett also develops along similar lines. [90] Other literary friendships serve the same purpose. This is not to say that Oliphant, who had earlier decided to dissociate herself from the kind of literary biography that provides anecdotes of literary men and women of higher status, would succumb to such writing now.⁴⁴ Importantly, the purpose of what appear to be anecdotes about famous people is to expand further the representation of intersubjective authorship.⁴⁵ They are deployed to demonstrate the most social possible aspect of writing: authorship is a collective activity (rather than intellectual and isolated) in its public dimensions as well; it is rooted in friendships and it also generates friendship and community and surrogate domesticities. Therefore M never discusses how she writes novels (potentially individualistic products easily perceived as being produced solely by their author); rather, she represents herself as gathering material for the biographies of her contemporaries. Her work of collecting material about her biographical subjects leads to a literary friendship with Montalembert, whom she meets through the influential introduction effected by John Blackwood. Her acquaintance with Carlyle is also rooted in a working relationship: she sought his acquaintance while collecting material for the Irving book, approaching the great man 'with the courage that comes to one when one is about one's lawful work, and not seeking acquaintance or social favour.' [96-

7] Clearly, her intention is to choose the particular genre and the particular part of the writing process for representation that is the least isolated and which makes the connection with other subjectivities necessary.

Yet the distance travelled by the end of the century – the journey made between her previously analysed models of authorship in the 1870s and the end-of-century return to the issue – is particularly to be measured by the representation of the public reception of M's career. Critics have devoted much attention to the sense of failure in the *Autobiography*, and M's authorship has generally been claimed to be the failure of a woman who did not fulfil her literary potential. This is what informs Woolf's description of Oliphant 'selling her brain,' and generations of critics have read the *Autobiography* as an apologia for her artistic failure.⁴⁶ To some extent, Oliphant was herself responsible for some of these comments. The decision to place family duty above artistic ambition and integrity is linked to family events taking place around 1870, when her depressive brother Frank and three of his children fell to M's care. She first discusses the process of decision making in 1885:

When my poor brother's family fell upon my hands, and especially when there was question of Frank's education, I remember that I said to myself, having then perhaps a little stirring of ambition, that I must make up my mind to think no more of that, and that to bring up the boys for the service of God was better than to write a fine novel, supposing even that it was in me to do so. [16]

M returns to the same event in the 1894-95 section, but now talks about the decision which had already been made:

I remember making a kind of pretence to myself that I had to think it over, to make a great decision, to give up what hopes I might have had of doing now my very best and to set myself steadily to make as much money as I could, and do the best I could for the three boys [...] One can't be two things or serve two masters. Which was God and which was mammon in that individual case it would be hard to say, perhaps, for once in a way mammon, meaning the money which fed my flock, was in a kind of poor way God, so far as the necessities of that crisis went. [132]

As this event is cited twice in nearly the same terms, it has been commonly read not only as an assessment of the relative value of art and familial duty but also the open admission of the aesthetic inferiority of her writing: the failure of achievement or a failure rooted in her not being capable of producing her very best.

However, a closer analysis of the account of M's career suggests a distinct tension between M's account of her career and her evaluation of the same. The dense texture of the narrative, on a closer reading, denies both aesthetic and financial failure. From an aesthetic perspective, M never openly states that family circumstances did indeed prevent her from producing good work. It is true that when she discusses Brontë, she is clear that her (M's) 'powers are [not] equal to hers,' yet it is significant that she makes this claim in 1864, well before the presumed choice between God and Mammon, and she explicitly attributes Brontë's superiority not to the earlier author's more favourable circumstances but to her superior artistic talent and thus to nature. [10] Eliot's authorship in the 'mental greenhouse' is a similar matter: Oliphant is clear about the comforts of a mental greenhouse, but she refuses to claim that it was Eliot's more favourable circumstances that made Eliot a better writer, and she is careful to emphasise that she does not think 'such small beer' of herself. [137] Moreover, financial failure or social marginalisation are never explicitly shown in the narrative. Although there is no very detailed account in the narrative of her publication practices, of her negotiations with publishers or indeed of the critical response to her published work, the sense one gains from her negotiations is more that of a rise than a fall. The starting point in the short section in 1861 is the nadir of her career; she then moves on to the success of the Carlingford stories and then to the spectacular financial success with the *Innocent*, which she sold to the *Graphic* for the respectable sum of £1300. Her oft-proclaimed social awkwardness and reticence and a life remote from the literary coteries in London (M claims to have 'detested' luncheon parties and afternoon gatherings, p. 137), are simply undermined by the text being peppered with names such as Montalembert, the Carlyles, Tennyson and Leslie Stephen, with most of whom she maintained intensive friendships. These facts confirm what is well-known from Margaret Oliphant's correspondence and other biographical sources, and make the text surprisingly 'truthful.' The force of the angry responses of Henry James and Hardy to her powerful persona are indicative of her social and critical power, while the party on Runnymede in 1877 celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of her association with *Blackwood's* shows her capacities as a hostess.⁴⁷ Her financial success, although clearly not placing her in the same bracket as Dickens or George Eliot, nevertheless

secured the comforts of the upper middle class life for herself and her household of eight.

The question still remains, however: if there is a gap between M's evaluation of the public dimensions of her career (unsuccessful, underpaid) and her account of it (not a very profound one, but certainly pointing more towards success than to failure) how does this come about? In other words, why does the evaluation claim that she was unsuccessful? And why does she not provide a detailed account of her career? A tentative suggestion might be that this paradox derives from the literary models available for the representation of the public success of female authorship.

The first question needing to be answered is the reason for the limited representation of M's success in the world of letters. Indeed, public response to her art remains undisclosed by the text. This absence may easily have been rooted in the lack of acceptable models for the analysis of the public or commercial dimensions of female authorship: while Martineau's self-congratulatory narrative obviously appalled Oliphant, the other available models of authorship – such as the ones provided by Coleridge, Howitt and Kemble, providing the rationale and ideology for domestic authorship – were rather short on detail about circulation of the successful professional woman in the marketplace. Kemble's narrative simply provides a *Record of a Girlhood*, while Somerville's story, though documenting public glory and old age, simply lists scientific success rather than placing them in an interpretive framework, and Oliphant's reviews of these memoirs refrain from making comments of the public circulation of these authors. At the same time, the theory of domesticated authorship was felt by the 1890s to be, in Peterson's phrase, 'démodé.'⁴⁸ This is evident in Oliphant's comment on Harriet Beecher Stowe's biography, where she says: 'Corinne and her lyre are coming back to displace the excellent wife and mother... [T]he whirligig of our time turns round again.'⁴⁹ The theory of domesticated authorship was no longer felt to be convincing and in tune with the times.

On the other hand, it is evident that M explicitly evaluates of own career as a failure, and this evaluation is arguably linked to the genre *Künstlerroman* that was particularly in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century. These novels often focused upon the conflict between artist and society, and in particular, upon the artist forced

to write in the commercialised world of literature. This conflict between artists and society is highlighted in Gissing's novel, *New Grub Street*, where commercialisation is represented as a distinct artistic curse and degradation that kills creative talent.⁵⁰ New woman fiction often looked at the same issue from the female author's perspective, and some of this fiction appeared in Oliphant's lifetime: Egerton's stories *Keynotes* and *Discord* (1893 and 1894) and Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1887), for example. In these narratives female artists are 'married wives and mothers, whose aesthetic ambitions have declined, (if they survive in any form at all) into the weary labour of the hack writer or journalist.'⁵¹ Indeed, it is a little unfortunate that Oliphant, despite her industrious career as a literary critic, only briefly reviewed Sarah Grand's *Ideala*, and she did not review any other representations of gloomy and suffering female artist figures in her journalism; yet she was aware that the difficulties of women writers entering the 'institutions of literature in their own terms' were in common fictional currency in the 1890s.⁵²

In this light, the dimensions of M's evaluation of her own failure become understandable in terms of contemporary fiction. It is clear that her failure is understood in purely commercial and critical terms. As she puts it, '[s]uccess as measured by money never came to my share.' [102] This is further confirmed by her self-comparison with other artists whose success is always perceived in either financial terms or in terms of more favourable critical acclaim. The financial failure of her life becomes particularly pertinent when it is compared with the monetary success of Muloch, Mrs Humphry Ward and Trollope – incidentally, the best paid authors of her time. When hinting at Muloch's success, she is careful to identify her success in literature as a specifically financial and commercial one. Blackett quickly recognised Muloch's very marketable strength in 'sentimentalism' [101] which was akin to his own and therefore she quickly secured lucrative contracts with her publisher. Muloch's financial success was only reinforced by her 'sturdy business-like stand for her money.' [102] The success of Trollope, who made 'at least three times as much' as M, is also identified in financial terms. [91] On the other hand, as she establishes, critical success is granted to those who relentlessly and publicly (over)emphasise their commitment to literature: Symonds, for instance, whose 'elaborate self-discussions' contributed to his high critical acclaim. [100] In other

words, public recognition, whether measured in financial or critical terms, is accorded to those who openly and publicly demand recognition for their achievement. M's authorship, therefore, is evaluated as a failure, but this failure is a failure to secure critical and financial recognition rather than an aesthetic failure. Moreover, her representation conforms to the model of the *Künstlerroman*, whose heroines fail in terms of accommodating their 'aesthetic ambitions to the demands of the marketplace.'⁵³ Yet this self-assessment of M appears to have more to do with the current trends of fiction than the actual account of her own career.

Canonical potential

Gail Twersky Reimer, in her account of Oliphant's *Autobiography*, argues that the inherent value of Oliphant's *Autobiography* lies in its innovative nature. As she suggests,

Oliphant's efforts to imagine and represent herself as a mother not only defy the conventions of Victorian autobiography but challenge prevailing assumptions of how women should define themselves while also highlighting the problematic position of a woman who wishes to speak as a mother. [...] Her goal is to gain hearing for *procreativity* in a genre dedicated to the exploration of *creativity*. [203, italics in the original]

For Twersky Reimer, the innovative power of the *Autobiography* is essentially a generic event: it consists in challenging the genre which normally valorises the vocational idiom over the maternal one. Considering the text as part of the autobiographical canon, the truth of Reimer's statement is undeniable, and generations of critics have attempted to find a place for the work in the generic canon. Yet, the *Autobiography* revises much more than the genre of autobiography – it reassesses and recapitulates Oliphant's earlier positions, providing a disillusioned view of domestic existence, it revises traditional definitions of authorship, and it reveals the roots of some of the misunderstandings and misinterpretations concerning Oliphant's career and the literary and artistic value of her oeuvre.

But despite the popularity of the *Autobiography*, and the current appreciation of its generic and thematic innovativity, the question still remains: why has Oliphant been practically erased from the canon of great Victorian woman writers? Why have her novels and journalism been consigned to oblivion? There have been some efforts

at recuperating her fiction and these efforts focused on unearthing those texts that challenge the 'Victorian sacred cows – romance, angels, feminine duty, innocence, passivity,' or that represent self-assertive and talented heroines who challenge traditional ideas of women's subservience and intellectual inferiority.⁵⁴ This tendency is evident in the republication of some of her work in the *Virago Classics* in the 1980s. Her Carlingford stories, providing often comic representations of talented young women, seem to display a degree of 'radicalism' or at least subversion of Victorian pieties, and this 'radicalism' does indeed correspond to our current critical sensitivity. Yet despite the correspondence between Oliphant's ambivalence about Victorian sanctities and the late twentieth century critiques of the same, Oliphant's interest in the minutiae of everyday life, in the complexities of middle-class women's domestic practices in the nineteenth century, in the conditions and nature of their authority in domestic matters, and in the similar concern with the circumstances of female authors, have not been deemed worthy of extensive critical interest.

Indeed, it is important to consider Langland's words on canon formation: a process that takes place both simultaneously and retrospectively. As she suggests, '[i]f we read canons, as, in part, repositories of a culture's professed values and self-representations,' we must ask pertinent questions not only about both late-Victorian and early modernist preferences in literature, but we need to assess our own positions as well.⁵⁵ Partly, the way our ideas about the emptiness of the lives of middle-class women in the nineteenth century have been shaped is largely attributable to the early twentieth century backlash against all things Victorian, exemplified by Lytton Strachey's iconoclastic *Eminent Victorians* (1918) and *Queen Victoria* (1921) which represent Victorian Great Men and Women as both pompous and idle – an image that, ironically, makes the unalloyed success of nineteenth century British imperial expansion somewhat incomprehensible. These ideas about the emptiness of Victorian women's lives are also attributable to Florence Nightingale's impassioned pleas about the futility of her own existence, and they often gain imaginative reinforcement from heroines like George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, whose dissatisfaction at the narrow limits of her experience is so dramatically represented. These representations effectively deny the density, and practical and emotional

intensity of women's lives in the domestic sphere, which Oliphant so aptly represented.

Canonicity raises other questions as well, such as the one Langland calls the potential for 'canonical status' of the woman writer who is immersed in domesticity, and whose (public or institutional) feminist credentials are understandable only within the context of her own period, and whose feminism, therefore, vastly diverges from our own.⁵⁶ Cultural distinction, until recently, has been accorded to those nineteenth century female authors, whose admittance to the Great Tradition of English literature has been unproblematic: most eminently, to Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, authors to whom Oliphant compared herself in her *Autobiography*, and whose reputation she rightly judged to be longer-lasting than her own. Their place was firmly secured in the canon of English literature already in the nineteenth century. Brontë's reputation as a romantic and isolated yet heroic figure was established early after her death by the Gaskell biography (*The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857). This biography spawned a whole series of Brontë biographies at the end of the nineteenth century, culminating in the rise of the Brontë-industry and the establishment of Haworth as a place of literary pilgrimage, rubberstamping the myth of romantic and isolated authorship.⁵⁷ Eliot's status as an iconic, 'sibylline sage' and solitary genius was already established in her lifetime and has been maintained ever since, with the role of literary biographies and reminiscences in the process being beyond question.⁵⁸ Her early canonisation was guaranteed by her inclusion and appreciation in the early histories of English literature and it was further emphasised by Leslie Stephen's critical biography for the *Men of Letters* series in 1902.⁵⁹ But it was not only the individualistic and heroic potential of these two women writers' lives – whether in the romantic or intellectual mode – that contributed to their mythical status in criticism and literary consciousness: the purportedly self-representational, solitary heroines like Romola and Lucy Snowe also reinforced the canonical status of their authors. Moreover, the nature of their writing also contributed to relatively easy canonisation. In Brontë's case, the image of a disarmingly brief and romantic life was successfully complemented by the 'emotional passion' of her writing.⁶⁰ As Mary Ward suggested of Charlotte Brontë's novels, she 'touches the shield of the reader; she does not woo or persuade him; she

attacks him.’⁶¹ In Eliot’s case, it was not so much the emotional passion of her work, rather, the ‘masculine’ erudition that made her work so easily assimilable into the canons of English literature. In a sense, Oliphant did everything the wrong way round: despite the exceptional achievement of her personal life – the social rise from a salaried clerk’s formally uneducated daughter to Queen Victoria’s personal friend, the literary power acquired during her life, and the commercially successful life of the *femme sole* – the contours of her life were not very different from that of the ordinary, middle class woman: she was often praised for her industry, personal propriety and her ‘passion of ministering’ to others, and therefore deprived herself of any romantic potential drawn from life.⁶² Nor does her solid domestic fiction lend itself to spectacularly heroic interpretation. Her three-decker novels refused both Brontë’s romance and Eliot’s erudition, and they also refused to break openly with social convention and decorum, and were also lacking in ‘concentration and concision, [in] elegance of language’ which became the only criteria of good literature in the 1890s.⁶³ Ironically, Oliphant was at her best at analysing passion, exploring the radical dimensions of well-worn Victorian sanctities about motherhood and sexuality, and using ‘concentration and concision’ in her late short stories, such as ‘The Two Marys,’ *A Beleaguered City*, ‘A Story of a Wedding Tour,’ and some more truly remarkable ones in her late collection *A Widow’s Tale*, yet regrettably, short stories have proved a genre rarely responsible solely for long-lasting literary reputation.

To her misfortune, Oliphant was also excluded from the process of canonisation as a ‘woman of letters,’ although she was avowedly more interested in the more substantial tasks of writing literary biography, literary criticism and literary history, rather than fiction. As she confessed to William Blackwood, she infinitely preferred the writing of the *Annals of a Publishing House*, the history of the Blackwood company, to the writing of novels, which made her heart ‘sicken.’⁶⁴ Yet canonisation appeared an infinitely more difficult process for the Victorian ‘woman of letters’ than for the opposite gender. Ironically, nineteenth century literary critics who became the foundational figures of English literary criticism – Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, and John Ruskin – were in many respects similar to Margaret Oliphant. Just like Oliphant, they all started their careers as general literary critics rather than

‘experts’ in literary criticism; just like Oliphant’s, their reputation rests upon their achievement in other genres, such as the ‘totality of his achievement’ (Arnold), fiction (Pater), or the entire body of writing (Ruskin).⁶⁵ The social mission of literature and of literary criticism was of equal importance to most of them.⁶⁶ Yet, Arnold, Pater and Ruskin differed from Oliphant in a very important sense: they enjoyed the institutional authority of the newly-created entities of literature. Not only was their journalism published in collected volumes during their lifetime, turning the ephemeral into permanence, but Arnold became Professor of Poetry at Oxford; Pater was also an Oxford don, while Stephen wielded unquestionable power through his editorship of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and was Professor of English at Cambridge.⁶⁷ When, in the 1930s, Victorian non-fiction prose first entered the canon of academia, the institutional support for these literary critics was solid and the pioneering books in the field like John Holloway’s *The Victorian Sage* (1953) only reinforced existing tendencies to define the Victorian non-fiction writer as masculine.

When telling the story of Oliphant’s reputation, and especially of Oliphant’s reputation as a female non-fiction writer, therefore, one has to account for many cultural factors that have prevented her inclusion in the canon, and indeed, which may hinder the continuing canonisation of Victorian female critics. Yet it is no more the case that existing critical narratives of the history of non-fiction only account for male literary critics. New critical narratives establishing the identity of the female sage and the female journalist such as Linda Peterson’s about the Victorian female sage, or Barbara Onslow’s about the ordinary woman journalist are beginning to be inserted in the critical canon. Significantly, these modern narratives about the achievement of Victorian women of letters have also discovered that Oliphant and her contemporaries already discussed women’s literature in critical terms.⁶⁸ Yet there are still many narratives to be told about Victorian female critics accepting or subverting contemporary notions about good literature, or about the way in which women critics and translators shaped British writing by bringing foreign literature closer to home. All these critical narratives will contribute to the better understanding of the position and views of Victorian female critics and Margaret Oliphant among them. To locate Margaret Oliphant’s activity in the field is still a task for the future.

ENDNOTES

¹ Leslie Stephen, 'Studies of a Biographer – Southey's Letters' *National Review* 33 (July 1899) p. 741, cited by John Stock Clarke, 'The Paradoxes of Oliphant's Reputation,' in D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995, pp. 33-48. Quoted from p. 34.

² The 1899 edition of Margaret Oliphant's *Autobiography* was republished in 1974, under the title *The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs M. O. W. Oliphant*, edited by Mrs Harry Coghill, introduced by Q. D. Leavis, Leicester: Leicester UP. My textual references are to the complete edition, edited by Elizabeth Jay, *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Henceforth: *JAL*.

³ Prior to the publication of the *Autobiography*, J. H. Millar devoted an entire series to Oliphant: 'Mrs Oliphant as a novelist,' *BM*, Sep 1897, pp. 306-319; 'Mrs Oliphant as a Biographer' *BM* April 1898, pp. 501-512; 'The Record of a Life,' *BM* May, 1899 pp. 895-904. For reviews of the *Autobiography*, see the footnotes below.

⁴ Blanche Warre Cornish, 'The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs Oliphant' *QR* 190 Jul 1899, pp. 255-267. Quoted from p. 256.

⁵ [*Scottish Review*] 'Mrs. Oliphant's Autobiography,' 34 (1899) pp. 124-138. Quoted from p. 138.

⁶ Stephen Gwynn, 'The Life and Writings of Mrs Oliphant,' *ER* (190) Jul 1899, pp. 26-47. Quoted from p. 28.

⁷ [*Atlantic Monthly*] 'The Autobiography of Mrs Oliphant,' (84) 1899 pp. 567-573. Quoted from p. 572.

⁸ [*The Academy*] 'The Autobiography of Mrs. Oliphant' 20 May, 1899, pp. 553- 554. Quoted from p. 554.

⁹ Elizabeth Jay, 'Introduction' to Margaret Oliphant, *Autobiography*, edited by Elisabeth Jay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990, x. Henceforth: *JAL*. The second quotation is Jay's reference to Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, London: Hogarth Press, 1938, p. 165.

¹⁰ Jay, 'Introduction,' ix-x

¹¹ Jay, 'Introduction,' ix

¹² It is important to acknowledge that Merryn Williams's 1986 biography of Oliphant (*Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) comments on the existence of the original manuscript in the National Library of Scotland. See p. 185.

¹³ Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing*. New York: Columbia UP, 1988, p. 58. Also cited by Joanne Shattock, 'Victorian Women as Writers and Readers of (Auto)biography,' in Vincent Newey and Philip Shaw (eds.), *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Autobiography*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, pp. 140-152.

¹⁴ Jay, 'Introduction,' xi. Jay cites W. E. Mosier, *Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*. Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Chicago, 1967, p. 9.

¹⁵ Valerie Sanders, "'Fathers' Daughters": Three Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Autobiographers' in Vincent Newey and Philip Shaw (eds.), *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Autobiography*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, pp. 153-171, esp. p. 152. Sanders points out that Oliphant's text belongs to the most often read and analysed Victorian female autobiographies.

- ¹⁶ Estelle C. Jelinek, 'Introduction,' in Estelle C. Jelinek, C. *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Ann Arbor: U.M.I., 1992, i-viii.
- ¹⁷ Linda Ruth Williams, 'Too Early and Too Late: Mrs Oliphant and the Wolf Man,' in her *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*, London: Edward Arnold, 1995, pp. 124-153. Quoted from p. 145.
- ¹⁸ Linda Peterson, 'Audience and the Autobiographer's Art: An Approach to the Autobiography of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant,' in G. P. Landow (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, Athens: Ohio UP, 1979, pp. 158-174.
- ¹⁹ Gail Twersky Reimer, 'Revisions of Labour in Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography,' in Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (eds.), *Life/Lines. Theorising Women's Autobiography*, Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1988, pp. 203-220.
- ²⁰ Peterson, 'Audience,' pp. 164-5.
- ²¹ Linda Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography as Professional Artist's Life,' in *Women's Writing*, vol. 6. Number 2 1999, pp. 261-278. Quoted from p. 264.
- ²² 'Autobiographies' *BM* Jul 1882, p. 81
- ²³ Reimer, 'Revisions,' p. 208.
- ²⁴ Sanders, 'Fathers,' p. 154.
- ²⁵ W. E. Mosier, *Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*, Ph. D. dissertation. Northwestern University, Chicago, 1967, p. 9.
- ²⁶ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993, p. 87.
- ²⁷ Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant,' p. 262.
- ²⁸ Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant,' p. 263.
- ²⁹ Reimer, 'Revisions,' p. 205.
- ³⁰ Shattock, 'Victorian,' pp. 143-145.
- ³¹ Jay, 'Introduction,' xiii.
- ³² J. D. Trela, 'Introduction,' in D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*. Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995, pp. 11-32. Quoted from pp. 11-12.
- ³³ 'Anthony Trollope,' *Good Words* 24 Feb 1883, pp. 142-4.
- ³⁴ Valerie Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p. 77.
- ³⁵ Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914*, London: Fontana Press, 1989, p. 79.
- ³⁶ Shattock, 'Victorian,' p. 141. Indeed, the very abundance of female artists' memoirs from the period challenges the very assumption about the constraints imposed on female autobiographers.
- ³⁷ Linda Peterson, 'Women Writers and Self-Writing,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 209-230. Cited from p. 213.
- ³⁸ Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain*, NY and Oxford: OUP, 1991, p. 216.
- ³⁹ Lyn Pykett, 'Portraits of the Artist as Young Women: Representations of the Female Artist in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s,' in Nicola Diane Thompson (ed.), *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 135-150. Cited from p. 141

- ⁴⁰ Monica F. Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. pp. 2-3.
- ⁴¹ 'Harriet Martineau,' *BM* Apr 1877, pp. 472-96.
- ⁴² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 366.
- ⁴³ Linda Peterson, 'Audience and the Autobiographer's Art: An Approach to the Autobiography of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant' in Landow (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, Athens: Ohio UP, 1979, pp. 158-174.
- ⁴⁴ Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant.' Reference to p. 263.
- ⁴⁵ Linda Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography as Professional Artist's Life,' in *Women's Writing*, vol. 6. Number 2 1999, pp. 261-278, esp. p. 263.
- ⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, London: Hogarth Press, 1938, p. 166.
- ⁴⁷ Jay, 'Introduction,' xi.
- ⁴⁸ Peterson, 'Margaret Oliphant,' p. 274.
- ⁴⁹ 'The Old Saloon,' *BM* Mar 1890, p. 410.
- ⁵⁰ Keating, *The Haunted*, pp. 80-82.
- ⁵¹ Pykett, 'Portraits,' p. 136.
- ⁵² Pykett, 'Portraits,' p. 139.
- ⁵³ Pykett, 'Portraits,' p. 142.
- ⁵⁴ Elizabeth Langland, 'Women's Writing in the Domestic Sphere,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 119-141. Quoted from p. 134.
- ⁵⁵ Langland, 'Women's Writing,' p. 134.
- ⁵⁶ Langland, 'Women's Writing,' p. 135.
- ⁵⁷ Joanne Shattock, 'The Construction of the Woman Writer,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 8-34, cited from p. 20.
- ⁵⁸ Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 162 and Shattock, 'The Construction,' pp. 26-28.
- ⁵⁹ Shattock, 'The Construction,' p. 11.
- ⁶⁰ Joanne Wilkes, 'Remaking the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. pp. 35-54. Quoted from p. 42.
- ⁶¹ Wilkes, 'Remaking the Canon,' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 35-54. Quoted from p. 42.
- ⁶² Howard Overing Sturgis, 'A Sketch from Memory,' *Temple Bar*, Oct. 1899, pp. 233-48. Quoted from p. 236.
- ⁶³ John Stock Clarke, 'The Paradoxes of Oliphant's Reputation,' in D. J. Trela (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*. Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995, pp. 33-48. Quoted from p. 38.
- ⁶⁴ Blackwood MSS. 4650, May 4, 1896. Quoted by R. A. and V Colby, *The Equivocal Virtue*. New York: Archon Books, 1966, p. 183.
- ⁶⁵ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 3.
- ⁶⁶ As Monica Cohen explains Harold Perkin's analysis of professional culture, it is marked by 'trained expertise, institutional affiliation and an ethic of social good.' Cohen, p. 18. Cohen here summarises Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional*

Society, New York: Routledge, 1990. Working for the social good was a characteristic of the mid-Victorian ethos, as it is obvious in critics's commitment to the social mission of fiction.

⁶⁷ Brake, *Subjugated*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993, pp. 95-106; and Linda Peterson, 'Sage Writing,' in Herbert F. Tucker, *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 373-387.

⁶⁸ Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000 and Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

I. Book-length works consulted by Margaret Oliphant

- Annals of a Publishing House*, Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1897.
The Athelings, Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1857.
At His Gates, Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Company, 1872.
Autobiography, edited by Elisabeth Jay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.
Autobiography and Letters, edited by Mrs Harry Coghill, Leicester: Leicester UP, 1974.
A Beleaguered City and Other Tales of the Seen and the Unseen, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000.
Cousin Mary, London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1888.
The Curate in Charge, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987.
Diana Trelawny, Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1892.
For Love and Life, London: Chapman and Hall, 1875.
Hester, London: Virago Press, 1984.
Historical Sketches of the Reign of George Second, Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1869.
The Ladies Lindores, Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1883.
The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century, London: Macmillan, 1882.
Jeanne D'Arc, London: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1896.
Joyce, London: Macmillan, 1888.
Kirsteen, London: J. M. Dent, 1984.
Lady Car, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889.
The Makers of Florence, London: Macmillan, 1877.
The Makers of Modern Rome, London: Macmillan, 1897.
The Marriage of Elinor, London: Macmillan, 1892.
Miss Margaret Maitland, London: Colburn, 1850.
Miss Marjoribanks. London: The Zodiac Press, 1969.
Molière (with F. Tarver), Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1879.
The Mystery of Mrs. Blencarrow, London: Spencer Blackett, n.d.
Neighbours on the Green, London and New York: Macmillan, 1889.
Old Mr Tredgold, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898.
Oliver's Bride, London: Ward and Downey, 1886.
Orphans, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1858.
Phoebe Junior, London: Virago Press, 1989.
The Quiet Heart, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1854.
Queen Victoria: A Personal Sketch, London, Paris, New York and Melbourne Cassell and Company Ltd, 1900.
The Railwayman and his Children, London: Macmillan, 1892.

The Rector and The Doctor's Family, London: Virago Press, 1986.
The Reign of Queen Anne, London: Macmillan, 1894.
Sons and Daughters, London: Blackwood, 1890.
The Three Brothers, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1870.
The Two Marys with Grove Road, Hampstead included. London: Methuen, 1896.
Two Strangers, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894.
The Victorian Age of English Literature (with F. R. Oliphant), B. A. London: Percival and Co. 1892.
The Ways of Life: Two Stories, (With her own 'Preface: On the Ebb Tide') London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1898.
Who Was Lost and Is Found, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1894.
A Widow's Tale and Other Stories, With an introductory note by J.M. Barrie. Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1898.
Within the Precincts, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1883.
Young Musgrave, London: Macmillan, 1883.
Zaidee, Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1856.

II. Periodical publications by Margaret Oliphant cited in the dissertation

All the periodical essays in this dissertation have been cited from the original periodical, therefore, the appendix provides the necessary information for their identification.

To this, there is one exception: the page numbers referring to the article 'The Grievances of Women' first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, refer to the reprint of the article in the following volume:

Susan Hamilton (ed.), *'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors: ' Victorian Writing on Women by Women*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995.

III. Manuscripts

The Blackwood MSS, Other Letters and MSS, Recent Acquisitions donated by the Heirs of Oliphant, Other recent acquisitions uncatalogued held in the National Library of Scotland. For an accurate listing, see J. S. Clarke, *Margaret Oliphant: Non-fictional Writing*, pp. 70-72.

Secondary Sources

I. References to pre-1900 material

Beeton, Isabella, *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (first published 1861) London: Chancellor Press, 1994.
 Boucherett, Jessie, 'How to provide for Superfluous Women?' in Josephine Butler (ed.), *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, London: Macmillan, 1869, pp. 27-48.
 Cobbe, Francis Power, 'Celibacy v. Marriage.' *Fraser's Magazine* (65), February 1862, pp. 228-235. Reprinted in Susan Hamilton (ed.), *'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors: ' Victorian Writing on*

- Women by Women*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995, pp. 74-83.
- 'What Shall we do with our Old Maids?' *Fraser's Magazine* (66), November 1862, pp. 594-610. Reprinted in Susan Hamilton (ed.), *'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors: ' Victorian Writing on Women by Women*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995, pp. 84-107.
- Greg, W. R. 'Why are Women Redundant?' written in April, 1862, reprinted in *Literary and Social Judgments*, London: Trubner and Co., 1869, pp. 280-316.
- Eliot, George, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, edited by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Ellis, Sarah Stickney, *Daughters of England*, Paris and London: Fisher and Son, n.d.
- *Education of the Heart*, London: Hodder and Stoughton 1869.
- *The Wives of England*, London and Paris: Fisher, Son and Co., 1843.
- Ferrier, Susan. *Marriage*, London: J. M. Dent, n.d.
- Lewes, Sarah, *Woman's Mission*, London: John W. Parker, 1839.
- Linton, Eliza Lynn, *Ourselves: A Series of Essays on Women*, London and NY: Routledge and Sons, 1870.
- 'The Girl of the Period' a series of essays published in the *Saturday Review*, 1868.
- Mill, John Stuart, *The Subjection of Women*, (first published 1869), Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1980.
- Parkes, Bessie Rayner, 'Employment for Women' *The Times* Sat Nov. 9, 1859. p. 7.
- *Essay on Women's Work*, London: Strahan, 1865.
- Reid, Marion, *A Plea for Woman*, (first published in 1843), Edinburgh; Polygon, 1988.
- Ruskin, John, *Sesame and Lilies: the Two Paths*, London: J. M. Dent, 1907.
- Sandford, Mrs. John, *Woman and her Social and Domestic Character*, London: Longman, 1831.
- Simcox, Edith, 'Eight Years of Cooperative Shirtmaking, *Nineteenth Century Review* (15), June 1884, pp. 1037-1054.
- Wise, James and Symington, John Alexander, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (first published in 1792), London: Penguin, 1992.

II. Contemporaries remembering Oliphant, Obituaries, and Contemporary Reviews

- [*The Academy*] 'The Autobiography of Mrs. Oliphant' 20 May, 1899, pp. 553- 554.
- [*Atlantic Monthly*] 'The Autobiography of Mrs Oliphant' 1899 (84), pp. 567-573.
- Benson, A. C., *Memories and Friends*, London: John Murray, 1924.
- Clarke, Isobel, *Six Portraits*, London: Hutchinson and Co., 1935.
- Coghill, Annie L., 'Mrs Oliphant,' *Fortnightly Review* (68) Aug 1897, pp. 277-285.
- Collins, Lucas, 'Mrs Oliphant's Novels' *BM* (113), Jun 1873, pp. 722-739.
- 'The Life of Edward Irving,' *BM* (91), Jun 1862, pp. 737-757.
- Dent, J. M., *Memoirs: 1849-1926*. London and Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1928.

- Gwynn, Stephen, 'The Life and Writings of Mrs Oliphant,' *ER* (190) Jul 1899, pp. 26-47.
- James, Henry, *The Complete Tales of Henry James*. vol. 8. London: Rupert-Hart Davis, 1963
- James, Henry, 'London Notes,' (Aug 1897); reprinted on *Notes on Novelists*, pp. 357-60.
- Lobban, J. H., 'Maga and her Publishers' *BM* (162) Dec 1897, pp. 860-72.
 - 'Mrs Oliphant,' *BM* (162) Jul 1897, pp. 161-164.
- Millar, J. H., 'Mrs Oliphant as a Novelist,' *BM* (162) Sep 1897, pp. 305-319.
- Millar, J. H., 'Mrs Oliphant as a Biographer,' *BM* (163) Apr 1898. pp. 501-512.
- Millar, J. H., 'The Record of a Life,' *BM* (165) May, 1899 pp. 895-904
- Millar, J. H., *The Literary History of Scotland*, London: Unwin, 1903
- Nicoll, W. R., 'Mrs Oliphant's Autobiography,' *The Bookman*, Jun 1899, pp. 67-68.
 [*Saturday Review*] Jul 23, 1870. p. 117.
- Shand, A. Innes, 'Contemporary Literature 1: Journalists' *BM* (124) Dec 1878, pp. 641-62.
- Skelton, John, 'A Little Chat About Mrs Oliphant' *BM* (133) Jan 1883, pp. 73- 91.
- Slater, Gertrude, 'Mrs Oliphant as a Realist' *Westminster Review* (148) December 1897, pp. 682-690.
- [*Spectator*] 'Grove Road, Hampstead and Two Marys' Jul 25, 1896, p. 119.
- [*Scottish Review*] 'Mrs. Oliphant's Autobiography' 34 (1899) pp. 124-138.
- Stephen, Leslie, 'Studies of a Biographer – Southey's Letters' *National Review* (33), Jul 1899, pp. 740-57.
- Sturgis, Howard Overing, 'A Sketch from Memory,' *Temple Bar*, (118) Oct, 1899, pp. 233-48
- Thackeray, Anne, Lady Ritchie, *From the Porch*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1915.
- Townsend, Meredith, 'Mrs Oliphant,' *The Cornhill* (79), Jun 1899, pp. 773-9.
- Warre Cornish, Blanche, 'The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs Oliphant,' *QR* (190) Jul 1899, pp. 255-267.
- Waters, Harriet Preston, 'Mrs Oliphant,' *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1885, pp. 733-744.
- Wilde, Oscar, *Intentions*, London: Methuen and Co., 1927.

III. Post-1900 Secondary Sources

- Altick, Richard, *Victorian People and Ideas*, London: Dent, 1973.
- Anderson and Rose (eds.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography* vol. 106, British Literary Publishing Houses, Detroit and London: Gale Research Inc., 1991.
- Ardis, Ann, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Armstrong, Nancy, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Oxford UP: Oxford, 1986.
- Baker, Ernest A., *The History of the English Novel*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1939.
- Beetham, Margaret, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine: 1800-1914*, London: Routledge, 1996

- Bell, Bill, Brake, Laurel and Finkelstein, David (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000.
- Beer, Gillian, *George Eliot*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986.
- Brake, Laurel, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994.
- Bland, Lucy, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914*, London: Penguin, 1995.
- Bowers, Toni, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Brady, Kristin, *George Eliot*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992.
- Brown, Lucy, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
- Caine, Barbara, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Caine, Barbara, *English Feminism: 1780-1980*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Campbell, Ian (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Scottish Fiction: Critical Essays*, Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1979.
- Clarke, J. S., 'Mrs Oliphant's Unacknowledged Social Novels,' *Notes and Queries* (28), Oct 1981, 408-13.
- Clarke J. S., 'The Rival Novelist – Hardy and Mrs Oliphant,' *The Thomas Hardy Journal* (5) Oct 1989, pp. 51-61.
- Clarke, J. S., *Margaret Oliphant, 1828-1897: a Bibliography*, St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1986.
- Clarke J. S., *Margaret Oliphant: Non-Fictional Writings*, St. Lucia, Queensland: Department of English, University of Queensland, 1997.
- Clarke, J. S., *The novels of Margaret Oliphant*, Ph.D dissertation. University of Leicester, 1983.
- Cockshut, A. O. J. *Truth to Life*, London: Collins, 1974.
- Cohen, Monica F., *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Colby, R. A. and V., *The Equivocal Virtue*, New York: Archon Books, 1966.
- Colby, R. A. and V., 'A Beleaguered City: a Fable for the Victorian Age,' *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 16, March 1962, pp. 283-301.
- Cosslett, Tess, *Woman to Woman*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1998.
- Cott, Nancy F., *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Cott, Nancy F., *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Crow, Duncan, *The Victorian Woman*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1971.
- Cross, Nigel, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- David, Deirdre, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot*, London: Macmillan, 1987.
- Davidoff, Leonore and Hall, Catherine, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- Delamont, Sara and Duffin, Lorna (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- Donovan, Josephine, 'Toward a Women's Poetics,' in Shari Benstock (ed.), *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1987, pp. 98-109.

- Eisenstein, Zillah, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, New York and London: Longman, 1981.
- Ezell, Margaret J., *Writing Women's Literary History*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- Fielding, Penny, *Writing and Orality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Flint, Kate, 'The Woman Reader and the Opiate of Fiction: 1855-1870,' in Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), *The Nineteenth Century British Novel*, London: Edward Arnold, 1986.
- Feltes, N., N., *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986.
- Gagnier, Regenia, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain*, NY and Oxford: OUP, 1991.
- Gallagher, Catherine, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Reform and Narrative Form: 1832-1867*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985.
- 'George Eliot and Daniel Deronda: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question,' in R. B. Yeazell, (ed.), *Sex, Politics and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986.
- Gilmour, Robin, *The Victorian Period*, London and New York: Longman, 1993.
- Gray, Margaret K., *The Fiction of Margaret Oliphant*, Ph ,D, Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1979.
- Gross, John, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969.
- Hardy, Thomas, 1912 Preface to *Jude the Obscure*, in Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, edited by Norman Page, NY: Norton, 1978.
- Hall, Catherine, 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology,' in Sandra Burman (ed.), *Fit Work For Women*, London: Croom Helm, 1979, pp. 15-32.
- Harrison, Brian, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Haythornthwaite, J. A., 'Friendly Encounters: A Study of the Relationship between the House of Blackwood and Margaret Oliphant in her Role as Literary Critic,' *Publication History* (28), 1990, pp. 79-88.
- Helsing E. K., Sheets, R, A, and Veeder, W. R., *The Woman Question: 1837-1883*, 3 vols, New York: Garland, 1983.
- Homans, Margaret and Munich, Adrienne (eds.), *Remaking Queen Victoria*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Houghton, Walter E., *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.
- Jackson, Margaret, *The Real Facts of Life*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994.
- Jackson, Stevi and Jones, Jackie (eds.), *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998.
- Jameson, Fredric, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Methuen, 1981.
- Jay, Elisabeth, *Mrs Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Jeffries, Sheila, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930*, London: Pandora, 1985.
- Jelinek, Estelle C. (ed.), *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Ann Arbor: U.M.I. 1992.

- Jessop, Ralph, 'Viragos of the Periodical Press: Constance Gordon-Cumming, Charlotte Dempster, Margaret Oliphant and Christina Isobel Johnstone,' in Douglas Gifford and Dorothy Macmillan (eds.), *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997, pp. 216-231.
- Jump, Harriet Devine, *Women's Writing in the Victorian Period 1837-1901: An Anthology*, Edinburgh UP, 1999.
- Kämpfer, Birgit, *Margaret Oliphant's Carlingford series: an original contribution to the debate on religion, class, and gender in the 1860s and '70s*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 2001.
- Kaplan, Cora, *Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism*, London: Verso, 1986.
- Keating, Peter, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914*, London: Fontana Press, 1989.
- Kennedy, Ellen and Mendus, Susan (eds.), *Women in Western Political Philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987.
- Kent, Susan Kingsley, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain: 1860-1914*, London: Routledge, 1990.
- Landes, Joan B., *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Langland, Elizabeth, *Nobody's Angels: Middle Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.
- Longford, Elizabeth, *Victoria R.I.* London: World Books, 1969, pp. 725-6.
- Levine, Philippa, *Victorian Feminism*, London: Hutchinson, 1987.
- Levy, Anita, *Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race and Gender, 1832-1898*, Princeton UP, 1991.
- Lovell, Terry, *Consuming Fiction*, London: Verso, 1987.
- Luftig, Victor, *Seeing Together: Friendship between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf*, Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1993.
- Mellor, Anne, *Romanticism and Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Menand, Louis, *Discovering Modernism: T, S, Eliot and His Context*, Oxford: OUP, 1987.
- Mermin, Dorothy, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993.
- Miller, Nancy K., *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing*, New York: Columbia UP, 1988.
- Millett, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, Rupert Hart-Davis: London, 1971, .
- Mitchell, J., and Oakley, A. (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976,
- What is Feminism?* Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Moers, Ellen, *Literary Women*, London: Women's Press, 1978.
- Moi, Toril, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*: London and New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Morgan, Thaïs M. (ed.), *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Mosier, W. E., *Mrs Oliphant's Literary Criticism*, Ph, D, Dissertation, Northwestern University, Chicago, 1967.
- Nestor, Pauline, *Female Friendship and Communities: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.

- Newey, Vincent and Shaw, Philip (eds.), *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996.
- Newton, Judith Lowder, 'Making – And Remaking – History: Another Look at "Patriarchy,"' in Shari Benstock (ed.), *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1987, pp. 124-140.
- O'Gorman, Francis (ed.), *The Victorian Novel*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
- Okin, S. M., *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton UP, Princeton, 1979.
- Onslow, Barbara, '“Humble comments for the Ignorant”: Margaret Oliphant's Criticism of Art and Society,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 31:1 Spring 1998, pp. 55-74.
- Onslow, Barbara, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.
- Perkin, Harold, *The Rise of Professional Society*, New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Peterson, Linda, 'Audience and the Autobiographer's Art: An Approach to the Autobiography of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant,' in G. P. Landow, (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, Athens and Ohio: Ohio UP, 1979.
- 'Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography as Professional Artist's Life' in *Women's Writing*, vol. 6, number 2, 1999, pp. 261-278.
- Poovey, Mary, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Virago Press: London, 1988.
- Pykett, Lyn, *Reading fin-de-siècle Fictions*, London: Longmans, 1996.
- Reimer, Gayle Twersky, 'Revisions of Labour in Margaret Oliphant's Autobiography,' in Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (eds.), *Life/Lines, Theorising Women's Autobiography*, Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Rendall, Jane, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860*, Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1985.
- Rowbotham, Sheila, *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
- Rubik, Margarete, *The Novels of Mrs Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes*, New York: Peter Lang, 1994.
- Sanders, Valerie, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Novelists*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996.
- Sanders, Valerie, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.
- Shattock, Joanne (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- 'Margaret Oliphant: Journalist,' in Barbara Garlick and Margaret Harris (eds.), *Victorian Journalism: Exotic and Domestic*, Queensland: University of Queensland, 1998, pp. 95-107.
- Shires, Linda M., *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- Shaw, Marion, 'Victorian Women Prose Writers,' in Arthur Pollard (ed.), *The Victorians* New York: Peter Bedrick, 1987, pp. 199-237.
- Showalter, Elaine, *A Literature of Their Own: British Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* Virago: London, 1978.
- 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, New York: Pantheon, 1985.

- 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the Fin de Siècle' in Yeazell, R. B. (ed.), *Sex, Politics and Science*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1986.
- Small, Ian, *Conditions for Criticism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Smith, Bonnie G., *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700*, Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: D.C. Heath, 1989.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, edited by Bradford A Booth and Ernest Mehew, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1994.
- Strachey, Ray, *The Cause: A Short History of the Woman's Movement in Britain*, London: Virago, 1978.
- Sullivan, Alvin (ed.), *British Literary Magazines*, Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 1983-86.
- Sutherland, J. A., *Victorian Novelists and Publishers*, London: Athlone Press, 1976.
- Terry, R. C., *Victorian Popular Fiction 1860-1880*, London: Macmillan, 1983.
- Thompson, Nicola Diane, *Reviewing Sex: Gender and Reception of Victorian Novels*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.
- Thompson, Nicola Diane, *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Thompson, Dorothy, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power*, London: Virago, 1990.
- Trela, D. J., 'Margaret Oliphant's "bravest words yet spoken" on Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle' in *The Carlyle Annual* 18, 1998, pp. 153-166.
- Todd, Emmanuel, *The Causes of Progress: Culture, Authority and Change*, Trans, Richard Boulind, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Tosh, John and Roper, Michael (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- Trela, D. J. (ed.), *Margaret Oliphant: Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, Susquehanna, Penn: Associated UP, 1995.
- Tredrey, F. D., *The House of Blackwood: 1804-54*, Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1954.
- Tucker, Herbert F. (ed.), *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.
- Vicinus, Martha, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920*, London: Virago, 1985.
- Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals: 1824-1900*, Toronto: Toronto UP, London: Routledge, 1989.
- Williams, Linda Ruth, 'Too Early and Too Late: Mrs Oliphant and the Wolf Man' in her *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*, London: Edward Arnold, 1995, pp. 124-153.
- Williams, Merryn, *Margaret Oliphant: A Critical Biography*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986.
- Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*, London: Hogarth, 1931
- Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, London: Penguin Books, 1993.
- Woolf, Virginia, *Three Guineas*, London: Hogarth Press, 1938.

APPENDIX: THE CHRONOLOGY OF OLIPHANT'S WORKS

The following appendix aims to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the writing of Oliphant's works. Somewhat similar lists do already exist: Mrs Harry Coghill, the first editor of Oliphant's *Autobiography and Letters*, already attached a list of Oliphant's published works, as well as her contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* to her volume, and these lists were reproduced in Merryn Williams's biography of the author. Separate lists of her published novels have also been published before (by the Colbys and Jay), and John Stock Clarke has also produced two bibliographical indices, one to her fiction and the other to her non-fiction. Yet my appendix below, drawing on John Stock Clarke's research, differs from all the above. I have attempted to list all of Oliphant's works chronologically, irrespective of genre, within the same list. The advantage of my listing is that it makes easier the tracing of her ideas in various periodicals and volumes, in her fiction and non-fiction. On the other hand, my list does not aim to give a chronological list of her *publications*, rather, it is a chronological list of her works in the sequence of *writing*. This, of course, is based on the list of her publications (a different one would require the meticulous consultation of her yet unpublished correspondence, and therefore, is beyond my remit now), but it reveals important differences. My list provides information that would remain otherwise hidden for the reader – a particular text in question is her novel *Diana Trelawny*, written in 1877, not published until the 1890s. Some of her short stories had a somewhat similar fate: some were written and published as early as 1868 in periodicals, but they were not published in book form until the late 1880s. This difference can make the reader believe that the story was written decades later.

Under the heading of each year, I first listed the whole books published in the given year, and, subsequently, under each month, the articles published, in all the periodicals covered by John Stock Clarke. Novels first published as serials and then in book form presented an obvious problem, and for the sake of simplicity, I listed them as entire books, adding the details of serial publication. When a short story or novella was published in serial form, I tended to include them under the monthly headings if they did not exceed two parts, if they did, I entered them under the year heading. Therefore, if the reader wants to know what Oliphant worked on in February 1872, it is advisable to consult the data for 1871 (she might still be running a serial begun in 1871) and both the first items under 1872 (maybe there is a serial publication started in Jan 1872), as well as the monthly entries for February 1872.

For periodical articles, I have provided the volume number, the month and year of publication, as well as the page numbers, wherever the information was available.

1849

Passages in the Life of Mrs Margaret Maitland, of Sunnyside, Written by Herself (London: Colburn, 1849)

1850

Merkland: A Story of Scottish Life (London: Colburn, dated 1851, published 1850)

'The Christian Knight's Vigil, A Chant, Addressed to a young minister on the eve of his ordination' (*The English Presbyterian Messenger* December, 1850, p. 564)

1851

Caleb Field: A Tale of the Puritans (London: Colburn, 1851)

John Drayton, Being A History of the Early Life and Development of a Liverpool Engineer (London: Bentley, 1851)

1852

Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme of Mossgray (London: Colburn, 1852)

The Melvilles (London: Bentley, 1852)

Katie Stewart: A True Story (BM 72; Jul- Nov 1852, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1853)

September

'Annie Orme: How Annie Orme was Settled in Life, and What We Did to Help it on' (*Sharpe's London Magazine* Sep-Oct 1852)

1853

Harry Muir: A Story of Scottish Life (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853)

Ailieford: A Family History (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853)

The Quiet Heart (BM 74-75; Dec 1853-May 1854; book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1854)

March

'John Rintoul' (BM 73 Mar-Apr) pp. 329-47; 410-30

June

'The Shadow on the Way' [poem] BM 73 pp.730-1

1854

Magdalen Hepburn: A Story of the Scottish Reformation (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854)

Zaidee: A Romance (BM 76-78; Dec 1854-Dec 1855; book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1856)

June

'Mary Russell Mitford' BM 75 pp. 658-70

July

'Evelyn and Pepys' BM 76 pp. 35-52

September

'The Holy Land' BM 76 pp. 243-55

1855

Lilliesleaf: Being the Concluding Series of Passages in the Life of Mrs Margaret Maitland, of Sunnyside, Written by Herself (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855)

January

'Mr Thackeray and his Novels' *BM* 77 pp. 86-96
 February
 'Bulwer' *BM* 77 pp. 221-33
 April
 'Charles Dickens' *BM* 77 pp. 451-66
 May
 'Modern Novelists – Great and Small' *BM* 77 pp. 554-68
 July
 'Modern Light Literature – Theology' *BM* 78 pp. 72-86
 August
 'Modern Light Literature – Science' *BM* 78 pp. 215-30
 October
 'Modern Light Literature – History' *BM* 78 pp. 437-51
 November
 'Modern Light Literature – Travellers' Tales' *BM* 78 pp. 586-99
 December
 'Modern Light Literature – Art' *BM* 78 pp. 702-17

1856

Christian Melville (London: David Bogue, 1856)
The Athelings, or Three Gifts (*BM* 79-81; Jun 1856-Jun 1857, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1857)

February
 'Modern Light Literature – Poetry' *BM* 79 pp. 125-38
 'Religion in Common Life' *BM* 79 pp. 243-6
 March
 'Sydney Smith' *BM* 79 pp. 350-61
 April
 'The Laws Concerning Women' *BM* 79 pp. 379-87
 August
 'Macaulay' *BM* 80 pp. 127-41
 September
 'Macaulay' *BM* 80 pp. 365-78
 October
 'Family History' *BM* 80 pp. 456-71
 'A New Una' *BM* 80 pp. 485-9
 November
 'The Art of Cavilling' *BM* 80 pp. 613-28

1857

Sundays (London: James Nisbet and Co, dated 1858, published 1857)
The Days of My Life: An Autobiography (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857)

January
 'A Christmas Tale' *BM* 81 pp. 74-86
 March
 'Picture Books' *BM* 81 pp. 309-18

July

'Charles the Fifth' *BM* 82 pp. 40-55

October

'Modern Light Literature – Society' *BM* 82 pp. 423-37

'From India' [poem] *BM* 82 pp. 505-6

November

'Eben, a True Story' (*The National Magazine* Nov-Dec)

1858

Orphans: A Chapter in Life (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1858)

The Laird of Norlaw: A Scottish Story (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1858)

January

'Béranger' *BM* 83 pp. 102-20

February

'The Condition of Women' *BM* 83 pp. 139-54

April

'The Missionary Explorer' *BM* 83 pp. 385-401

June

'Religious Memoirs' *BM* 83 pp. 703-18

August

'The Byways of Literature' *BM* 83 pp. 200-16

November

'Edward Irving' *BM* 84 pp. 567-86

December

'Sermons' *BM* 84 pp. 728-42

1859

Agnes Hoptoun's Schools and Holidays: The Experiences of a Little Girl (London: Macmillan, 1859)

Lucy Crofton (London: Hurst and Blackett, dated 1860, published 1859)

August

'Felicita' (*BM* 86; Aug -September) pp. 189-207; 273-94

October

'The Seaside in the Papal States' *BM* 86 pp. 471-88

November

'A Week in Florence' *BM* 86 pp. 583-607

1860

June

'Scottish National Character' *BM* 87 pp. 715-31

July

'Poetry' *BM* 88 pp. 37-53

September

'The Romance of Agostini' (*BM* 88 Sep- Dec) pp. 282-301; 439-57; 523-41; 650-69

December

'Social Science' *BM* 88 pp. 698-715

1861

Translation of *The Monks of the West* by the Count de Montalembert, vols. 1-2 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1861)

The House on the Moor (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861)

January

'A Merry Christmas!' *BM* 89 pp. 106-14

May

'The Executor' *BM* 89 [short story, not republished in Britain in her lifetime in book form] pp. 595-614

June

'The Monks of the West' *BM* 89 pp. 665-81

August

'Joseph Wolff' *BM* 90 pp. 135-53

September

'Scotland and her Accusers' *BM* 90 pp. 267-83

'The Rector' *BM* 90 pp. 284-301; (book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood 1863)

October

The Doctor's Family *BM* pp. 90-91; 420-439; 525-45; 689-708; 55-76 (Oct 1861-Jan 1862; book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1863)

'Isabell Carr' (*St James Magazine* 2 Oct-Nov pp. 271-282; 399-412)

December

'Augustus Welby Pugin' *BM* 90 pp. 670-89

1862

The Last of the Mortimers: A Story in Two Voices (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862)

The Life of Edward Irving, Minister of the National Scotch Church (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862)

Salem Chapel (*BM* 91-93; Feb 1862-Jan 1863, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1863)

January

'The Nation's Prayer' [poem] *BM* 91 p. 136

'J. M. W. Turner R. A.' *BM* 91 pp. 17-34

April

'The Lives of Two Ladies' *BM* 91 pp. 401-23

May

'Sensation Novels' *BM* 91 pp. 564-84

June

'The New Exhibition' *BM* 91 pp. 663-72

July

'David Wingate' *BM* 92 pp. 48-61

August

'Sermons' *BM* 92 pp. 202-20

December

'John Wilson' *BM* 92 pp. 751-67

1863

Heart and Cross (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1863)

The Perpetual Curate (*BM* 93-95; Jun 1863- Mar 1864, May 1864- Sep 1864, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1864)

A Son of the Soil (*MM* 9-11; Nov 1863- Apr 1865, book form: London: Macmillan, 1866)

February

'Henri Lacordaire' *BM* 93 pp. 169-87

March

'Mrs Clifford's Marriage' (*BM* 93 Mar-Apr) pp. 284-300; 414-36

April

'Marriage Bells' *BM* 93 pp. 251-4

June

'Girolamo Savonarola' *BM* 93 pp. 690-713

July

'Clerical Life in Scotland'- *MM* 8 pp. 208-19

August

'Novels' *BM* 94 pp. 168-83

'In the Garden' [poem] *BM* 94 pp. 244-5

'A Story of a Voice' *Victoria Magazine* (Aug-Sep)

October

'Amen! in the Cathedral of St. Andrews' [poem] *BM* 94 pp. 497-8

November

'Tara' [by Meadows-Taylor] *BM* 94 pp. 624-34

1864

Jan and March: the earliest section of the *Autobiography*

October

'The Life of Jesus' *BM* 96 pp. 417-31

1865

Miss Marjoribanks (*BM* 97-99; Feb-Dec 1865, Feb-May 1866, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1866)

Agnes (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1865, dated 1866)

January

'Day and Night' [poem] *BM* 97 pp.89-91

'Life in an Island' *BM* 97 pp. 72-88

August

'Josiah Wedgwood' *BM* 98 pp. 154-70

October

'Giacomo Leopardi' *BM* 98 pp. 459-80

November

'French Periodical Literature' *BM* 98 pp. 603-21

1866

Madonna Mary (*GW* Jan – Dec 1866, book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1866)

February

'General Lamoricière' *BM* 99 pp. 224-35

August

'The Nile' *BM* 100 pp. 205-24

September

'The Great Unrepresented' *BM* 100 pp. 367-79

December

'Victor Hugo' *BM* 100 pp. 744-69

1867

The Brownlows (*BM* 101-3; Jan 1867-Feb 1868, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1868)

Translation of *The Monks of the West* vols. 3-5 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1867)

March

'The History of Scotland' *BM* 101 pp. 317-38

'The Innermost Room' [poem] *BM* 101 pp. 338-40

April

'Elizabeth and Mary' *BM* 101 pp. 389-414

September

'Novels' *BM* 102 pp. 257-80

'A Royal Idyll' *BM* 102 pp. 375-84

October

'A City of the Plague' *BM* 102 pp. 452-61

December

'Madam Saint-Ange' *Good Cheer*

'The Conversion of England' *BM* 102 pp. 702-24

1868

February

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.I – The Queen' (*BM* 103 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp.195-221.

'The Queen of the Highlands' *BM* 103 pp. 242-250

'My Neighbour Nelly' (*CM* 17 pp. 210-38; to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889)

April

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.II – The Minister' (*BM* 103 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 412-40

'The Ship's Doctor' (*GW*, to be published with *The Lady's Walk* under the title *The Lady's Walk* London: Methuen and Co. 1897)

'Lady Denzil' *CM* 17 pp. 429-61 (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889)

May

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.III – The Man of the World' (*BM* 103; to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 511-33.

June

'The Latest Lawgiver' *BM* 103 pp. 675-91

July

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.IV – Lady Mary Wortley Montagu' (*BM* 104 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 1-25

August

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.V – The Poet' (*BM* 104 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 226-51

September

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.VI – The Young Chevalier' (*BM* 104 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 259-85

'Bunsen' *BM* 104 pp. 285-308

'The Stockbroker at Dinglewood' *CM* 18 (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889) pp. 311-43

October

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.VII – The Reformer' (*BM* 104 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp.428-56

December

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.VIII – The Sailor' (*BM* 104 to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp.678-98

1869

The Minister's Wife (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1869)

The Three Brothers (*St Paul's and Appleton's Journal* Jun 1869- Sep1870, simultaneously, book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1870)

Introduction to *Life and Remains of Robert Lee D.D.* by Robert Henry Story (London: Hurst and Blackett, dated 1870, published 1869), vol. 1. xi-xxiv

John: A Love Story (*BM* 106-8; Nov 1869-Jul 1870, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1870)

January

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No.IX – The Philosopher' (*BM* 105, to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp.1-29

March

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No. X – The Novelist' (*BM* 105, to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 252-76

June

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No. XI – The Sceptic' (*BM* 105, to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 665-91

August

'Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No. XII – The Painter' (*BM* 106, to be collected and published under the same title, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1869) pp. 140-68

September

'Mrs Merridew's Fortune' *CM* 20 (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889) pp. 327-355

October

'Charles Reade's Novels' *BM* 106 pp. 488-514

'The Subjection of Women' *ER* 130 pp. 572-602

November

'Saint-Eloy-sur-les-Dunes' *BM* 106 pp. 600-17

1870

Squire Arden (*The Star*, *Glasgow Evening Post* Jun-Sep 1870, book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1871)

Francis of Assissi (London: Macmillan, 1870)

January

'Mr Froude and Queen Mary' *BM* 107 pp. 105-22

March

'Miss Austen and Miss Mitford' *BM* 107 pp. 290-313

April

'Chatterton' *BM* 107 pp. 453-76

'Count Charles de Montalembert' *BM* 107 pp. 522-30

'The Epic of Arthur' *ER* 131 pp. 502-39

May

'New Books' 1 *BM* 107 pp. 628-51

August

'New Books' 2 *BM* 108 pp. 166-88

October

'Piccadilly' *BM* 108 pp. 401-22

'Boating on the Thames' *BM* 108 pp. 460-77

November

'New Books' 3 *BM* 108 pp. 607-31

1871

January

'New Books' 4 *BM* 109 pp. 22-47

March

'Lady Isabella' (CM 23 Mar- Apr, to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889) pp. 296-309, pp. 425-443.

April

'New Books' 5 BM 109 pp. 440-64

May

'Norah, the Story of a Wild Irish Girl' (*Scribner's Monthly* May-Jun)

June

'Charles Dickens' BM 109 pp. 673-95

'A Century of Great Poets, from 1750 Downwards I: William Cowper' BM 109 pp. 763-93

July

'New Books' 6 BM 110 pp. 62-80

August

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards II: Walter Scott' BM 110 pp. 229-256

September

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards III: William Wordsworth' BM 110 pp. 299-326

October

'American Books' BM 110 pp. 422-42

'New Books 7' BM 110 pp. 458-80

November

'A Century of Great Poets' from 1750 Downwards IV: Samuel Taylor Coleridge' BM 110 pp. 552-76

'The Two Mrs Scudamores' (*Scribner's Monthly* Nov-Dec 1871, Jan 1872, and BM 110-111, Dec 1871- Jan 1872)

1872

At His Gates (GW and *Scribner's Monthly*, simultaneously, Jan- Dec 1872; book form: London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872)

The Two Marys (MM 26-7; Sep, Nov, Dec 1872, Jan 1873; book form: *The Two Marys* London: Methuen and Co, 1896)

Memoir of Count de Montalembert, A Chapter in Recent French History (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1872)

Ombra (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1872)

January

'Mr Browning's *Balaustion*' ER 135 pp. 221-49

February

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards V: Burns' BM 111 pp. 140-68

March

'Voltaire' BM 111 pp. 270-290

April

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards VI: Shelley' BM 111 pp. 415-40

'New Books 8' BM 111 pp. 478-99

June

'New Books 9' BM 111 pp. 735-56

July

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards VII: Lord Byron' *BM* 112 pp. 49-72

August

'New Books 10' *BM* 112 pp. 196-217

October

'William Smith' *BM* 112 pp. 429-38

November

'The Scientific Gentleman' *CM* 26, Nov-Dec, pp. 618-40; 737-60; (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889)

December

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards VIII: J. W. Goethe' *BM* 112 pp. 675-97

'New Books' 11 *BM* 112 pp. 746-65

1873

May (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1873)

Innocent (*Graphic* Jan-Jun 1873; book form: London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873)

February

'New Books' 12 *BM* 113 pp. 206-21

'In London' *BM* 113 pp. 222-34

March

'Lord Lytton' *BM* 113 pp. 356-78

May

'Kenelm Chillingly' *BM* 113 pp. 615-30

July

'Alexandre Dumas' *BM* 114 pp. 111-30

August

'A Visit to Albion' pp. *BM* 114 pp. 223-240

'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards IX: Johann Friedrich Schiller' *BM* 114 pp. 183-206

September

'New Books' 13 *BM* 114 pp. 368-90

October

'A Railway Junction' *BM* 114 pp. 419-441

November

'New Books' 14 *BM* 114 pp. 596-617

1874

The Story of Valentine and his Brother (*BM* 115-7, Jan 1874- Feb 1875, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1875)

A Rose in June (*CM* 29-30 Mar-Aug 1874; book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1874)

For Love and Life (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1874)

January

'The Indian Mutiny: Sir Hope Grant' *BM* 115 pp. 102-20
 February
 'Fables in Song' *BM* 115 pp. 248-66
 March
 'The Rights of Women' *Spectator* 7 March pp. 301-2
 April
 'New Books' 15 *BM* 115 pp. 443-65
 June
 'New Books 16' *BM* 115 pp. 750-69
 July
 'The Painter' *MM* 30 pp. 229-50 (published as Chapter vii of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876)
 'Two Cities – Two Books' *BM* 116 pp. 72-91
 August
 'The Frate' *MM* 30 pp. 323-33 (published as Chapters viii and ix of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876)
 'New Books' 17 *BM* 116 pp. 166-83
 September
 'Preacher and Prior' *MM* 30 pp. 418-428 (published as Chapter x of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876)
 'The Count's Daughters' *Good Cheer*
 'The Ancient Classics' *BM* 116 pp. 365-86
 November
 'The Ancient Classics – Latin Literature' *BM* 116 pp. 599-620
 December
 'The Count's Daughters' *Good Cheer*

1875

Whiteladies (GW Jan-Dec 1875; book form: London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875)
The Curate in Charge (*MM* 32-33; Aug 1875- Jan 1876; book form: London: Macmillan, 1876)
 Preface to *The Art of Swimming in the Eton Style* by 'Sergeant Leahy' (London: Macmillan, 1875) pp. i-ii

January
 'Savonarola as a Politician' *MM* 31 pp. 223-35 (published as Chapter xi of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan, 1876)
 'The Life of the Prince Consort' *BM* 117 pp. 114-31
 May
 'New Books' 18 *BM* 117 pp. 616-37
 June
 'The Sperimento' (*MM* 32, published as Chapter xii of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan, 1876) pp. 97-109
 'Art in May' *BM* 117 pp. 747-64
 July
 'New Books' 19 *BM* 118 pp. 82-99
 August

'Rivers' *BM* 118 pp. 167-88

September

'The Prophet's End' *MM* 32, pp. 424-33 (published as Chapter xiii of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan, 1876)

October

'The Early Years of Dante' *CM* 32, pp. 471-89 (published as Chapter i of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876)

November

'The Story of Ann Maturin' *Scribner's Monthly* pp.

December

'Dante in Exile' (*MM* 32, subsequently revised as Chapter iii of *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876, with the early paragraphs extended as Chapter ii) pp. 670-90

An Odd Couple (*Graphic* Dec 1875)

1876

Phoebe Junior: a last chronicle of Carlingford (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1876)

The Makers of Florence: Dante, Giotto, Savonarola and their City (London: Macmillan and Co, the periodical articles of 1874-1876 revised, and new chapters added iv, v, vi, xiv)

Carita (*CM* 33-36; Jun 1876- Aug 1877; book form: London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1877)

January

'Lace and bric-a-brac' *BM* 119 pp. 59-78

'The Study of History at Eton' *Spectator* 29 Jan pp. 142.

February

'A Century of Great Poets X: Alphonse de Lamartine' *BM* 119 pp. 207-31

'Mr Thackeray's Sketches' *BM* 119 pp. 232-43

March

'Eton College' *BM* 119 pp. 314-31

'Windsor Castle 1: The Order of the Garter' *SN* 3 pp. 292-8

'Assistant Masters' *CM* 33 pp. 288-99

April

'Norman Macleod' *BM* 119 pp. 507-26

May

'Macaulay' *BM* 119 pp. 614-37

'Windsor Castle 2: The Captive Prince' *SN* 3 pp. 430-5

June

'The Royal Academy' *BM* 119 pp. 753-69

July

'Windsor Castle 3: The Baby King' *SN* 3 pp. 553-8

'Memorials of a Quiet Life' *Spectator* 8 Jul pp. 866-7

August

'The Christian Doctrine of Sin' *Spectator* 12 Aug pp. 1013-4

'Windsor Castle 4: The Tudors' *SN* 3 pp. 626-31

'Molière' *BM* 120 pp. 172-90

September

'Windsor Castle 5: The Stuarts' *SN* 3 pp. 689-96

'Alfred de Musset' *BM* 120 pp. 361-82.

'Giacomo Leopardi' *CM* 34 pp. 341-57

October

'Windsor Castle 6: Queen Victoria' *SN* 3 pp. 759-66

'Michel Angelo' *BM* 120 pp. 461-82 (revised as Chapter xv in *The Makers of Florence*, London: Macmillan 1876)

December

'The secret chamber' *BM* 120

1877

Diana Trelawny: The History of a Great Mistake (written in 1877, published in *BM* Feb-Jul 1892, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1892)

Dante, Foreign Classics for English Readers 1 (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1877)

Young Musgrave (*MM* 35-37; Jan- Dec1877, book form: London: Macmillan and Co, 1877)

Mrs Arthur (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1877)

February

'New Books: Biographies' 20 *BM* 121 pp. 175-95

March

'Lord Neaves' *BM* 121 pp. 380-90

April

'Harriet Martineau' *BM* 121 pp. 472-96

September

'A School of the Prophets' *BM* 122 pp. 283-302

December

'The Lily and the Thorn' *Good Cheer* (afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

'The Opium-Eater' *BM* 122 pp. 717-41

'The Barley Mow' *The Graphic*, Christmas number (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan, 1889)

1878

Dress (London: Macmillan, 1878)

The Primrose Path (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1878)

Within the Precincts (*CM* 37-39; Feb 1878-Apr1879; book form: London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1879)

Postscript to the Preface to *Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson*, by her niece Gerardine Macpherson, and edited for the press by Oliphant (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1878) pp. xiii-xvii.

January

'Venice' *Spectator* 19 Jan pp. 90-1

March

'New Books' 21 *BM* 123 pp. 305-27

June

'New Books' 22 *BM* 123 pp. 681-702

August

'Englishmen and Frenchmen' *BM* 124 pp. 219-37

October

'The Correspondence of M. de Balzac' *ER* 148 pp. 528-58

'Three Days in Paris' *BM* 124 pp. 455-74

1879

Molière: Foreign Classics for English Readers (with F.B.C. Tarver; Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1879)

The Greatest Heiress in England (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1879, dated 1880)

He that will not when he may (*MM* 41-43; Nov 1879-Nov 1880, book form: London: Macmillan 1880)

Translation of *The Monks of the West* vols. 6-7. (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1879)

'A Party of Travellers' (*GW* Mar, Jun, Oct 1879)

January

A Beleaguered City (*New Quarterly Magazine* 11 Jan 1879; this version is later to be extended and published in book form by London: Macmillan, dated 1879, but published in 1880) pp. 73-149.

'The Novels of Alphonse Daudet' *BM* 125 pp. 93-111

February

'Two Ladies' *BM* 125 pp. 206-24

April

'Hamlet' *BM* 125 pp. 462-81

July

'New Books' 23 *BM* 126 pp. 88-107

November

'An American Princess' *BM* 126 pp. 543-61

'An Elderly Romance' *CM* 40 pp. 549-72 (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan, 1889)

December

The Fugitives (*Good Cheer*, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1890)

1880

Cervantes Foreign Classics for English Readers XI (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1880)

January

'Earthbound' *Fraser's* 101 pp. 118-144

February

'The Reign of Queen Anne' *BM* 127 pp. 139-62

May

'The Grievances of Women' *Fraser's* 101 pp. 698-710

'Russia and Nihilism in the Novels of Tourgenieff' *BM* 127 pp. 623-47

June

'The Life of the Queen' *The Graphic* Summer number 28 Jun pp.1-36

Jul

'School and College' *BM* 128 pp. 62-80

'Queen Victoria' (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* – the article for the *Graphic*, Jun 1880, abridged)

September

'A Modern Greek Heroine' *Spectator* 11 Sept pp. 1163

'New Novels' *BM* 128 pp. 378-404

November

'My Faithful Johnny' *CM* 42 Nov-Dec, pp. 513-35; 732-60 (to be collected in *Neighbours on the Green*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1889)

December

'That Little Cutty' *Home* (collected in *That Little Cutty* and other stories, London: Macmillan, 1898)

'Grove Road, Hampstead' *Good Cheer* (published with *The Two Marys*, London: Methuen, 1896)

1881

In Trust (*Fraser's* 103-105; Feb 1881-Jan 1882; London: Longmans, Green, 1882)

Harry Joscelyn (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1881)

January

'Autobiographies No. 1: Benvenuto Cellini' *BM* 129 pp. 1-30

'Ideal Men and Women' *Spectator* 8 Jan pp. 48

March

'Autobiographies No. 2: Lord Herbert of Cherbury' *BM* 129 pp. 385-410

April

'Thomas Carlyle' *MM* 43 pp. 482-96

May

'Autobiographies 3: Margaret Duchess of Newcastle' *BM* 129 pp. 617-39

August

'Post Mortem' *Spectator* 13 Aug pp. 1053-4

'Autobiographies 4: Edward Gibbon' *BM* 130 pp. 229-47

October

'Autobiographies 5: Carlo Goldoni' *BM* 130 pp. 516-41

December

'A Few French Novels' *BM* 130 pp. 703-23

1882

Lady Jane (*GW*, Jan-Jun 1882); retitled *The Duke's Daughter* and published together with *The Fugitives*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1890)

The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (Macmillan: London, 1882)

A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen (*MM* 46, May and Sept 1882)

The Little Pilgrim Goes up Higher (*MM* 46, Sept 1882)

The Ladies Lindores (*BM* 131-133 Apr 1882- May 1883, book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood 1883)

The Lady's Walk (*LM* 1-2 Dec 1882, Jan 1883)

The Wizard's Son (MM 47-49 Nov 1882- Mar 1884; book form: London: Macmillan, 1884)

January

'The Open Door' *BM* 131 pp. 1-30

March

'Recent Novels' *BM* 131 pp. 365-91

April

'Thomas Carlyle' *MM* 43 pp.482-96

May

'A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen' *MM* 46 pp. 1-19

'Democracy' by Henry Adams *BM* 131 pp.577-92

July

'Autobiographies No. 6: In the Time of the Commonwealth' *BM* 132 pp. 79-101

September

'The Little Pilgrim Goes Up Higher' *MM* 46 pp. 337-55

1883

Sheridan (London: Macmillan, 1883)

Sir Tom (*Bolton Weekly Journal* and other papers Jan- Jul, book form: London: Macmillan, 1884)

Hester (London: Macmillan, 1883)

It was a Lover and His Lass (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1883)

'Preface' to *Selections from Cowper's poems* (London: Macmillan, 1883) pp. v-xxiii

January

'Mrs Oliphant and Bishop Wilberforce' *Spectator* 6 Jan pp. 13-14

'American Literature in England' *BM* 133 pp. 136-61

February

'Anthony Trollope' *GW* 24 pp. 142-4

April

'Autobiographies No 7: Madame Roland' *BM* 133 pp. 485-511

May

'Mrs Carlyle' *CR* 43 pp. 609-28

July

'The Ethics of Biography' *CR* 44 pp. 76-93

August

'James Ferguson, the Astronomer' *BM* 134 pp. 244-63

September

'An Italian Officer under Napoleon' *BM* 134 pp. 379-93

October

'The Story of a Little War' *BM* 134 pp. 486-507

1884

Madam (LM 3-5 Jan 1884- Jan 1885; book form: London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1885, in fact published in 1884)

The Prodigals and Their Inheritance (*GW* Dec 1884; book form: London: Methuen, 1894)

January

'Old Lady Mary' *BM* 135 pp. 1-45

April

'The Sons of the Prophets: Two Representatives of the Catholic Faith' *BM* 135 pp. 529-53

May

'The Duke of Albany' *BM* 135 pp. 700-2

June

'Life on the Lagoons' *BM* 135 pp. 823-4

July

'Venice' *BM* 136 pp. 87-105

September

'Three Young Novelists' *BM* 136 pp. 296-316

October

'Heidelberg' *EIM* 2 pp. 39-47

November

'An Artists's Autobiography' *BM* 136 pp. 614-31

'Are Women a Represented Class?' *Spectator* 1 Nov p. 1437

December

'Dr Barrère' *EIM* (collected in *That Little Cutty and Other Stories*, London: Macmillan, 1898)

1885

A Country Gentleman and his Family (*Atlantic Monthly* Jan 1885-Feb 1886; book form: London: Macmillan 1886)

A House Divided against Itself (*Chamber's Journal* Jan-Dec 1885; book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1886)

Oliver's Bride: A True Story (*Bolton Weekly Journal* and other papers Apr-May 1885; book form: London: Ward and Downey, 1886)

Effie Ogilvie; A Story of a Young Life (*The Scottish Church* Jun 1885-May 1886; Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1886)

'An Elderly Lover' [play, privately printed, 1885]

January

'The Portrait' *BM* 137 pp. 1-28

February

Second section of the *Autobiography*

April

'The Life and Letters of George Eliot' *ER* 161 pp. 514-53

'A Soldier of Fortune' *BM* 137 pp. 460-84 (Heavily rewritten as Part II, chapter iii of *The Makers of Venice*, London: Macmillan, 1887)

May

'London in May' *BM* 137 pp. 684-705

July

'Victor Hugo' *CR* 48 pp. 10-32

'The Little Pilgrim in the Seen and Unseen' *The Scottish Church*

August

'General Gordon' *BM* 138 pp. 247-72

November

'A Scotch Physician' *BM* 138 pp. 669-90

1886

A Poor Gentleman (The Leisure Hour, Jan- Dec 1886; book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1889)

The Son of His Father (Bolton Weekly Journal, Apr-Oct 1886, book form: London: Hurst and Blackett, 1887)

'An Anxious Moment' *A New Amphibion*, published by Edinburgh: EUP, 1886

January

'Hurrish' *Spectator* 30 Jan pp. 147-8

'Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamond' *CM* 53 Jan-Feb pp. 1-29; 113-42 (afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

February

'London in January' *BM* 139 pp. 245-66

'Principal Tulloch' *Spectator* 20 Feb. pp. 250-1

March

'Scotch Local History' *BM* 139 pp. 375-97

'The Late Principal Tulloch' *BM* 139 pp. 414

April

'Principal Tulloch' *BM* 139 pp. 415-41

August

'A Venetian Dynasty' *CR* 50 pp. 188-208 (slightly rewritten as Part I, Chapter 1 of *The Makers of Venice*, London: Macmillan, 1887)

December

'Novels' *BM* 140 pp. 776-98

1887

The Makers of Venice: Doges, Conquerors, Painters and Men of Letters (London: Macmillan, 1887. Includes 12 chapters not published before and the rewritten versions of the relevant articles published in *BM*, Apr 1885, *CR* Aug 1886, and *BM* Sep 1887)

The Second Son (Atlantic Monthly 59-61; Jan 1887- Feb 1888; book form: London: Macmillan 1888)

Joyce (BM 141-143, May 1887- Apr 1888; book form: London: Macmillan 1888)

'The Story of An Anonymous Letter' *Court and Society Review* (Nov-Dec, 1887)

January

'The Land of Darkness' *BM* 141 pp. 1-36

'The Old Saloon: In *Maga's Library*' 1 *BM* 141 pp. 126-53

February

'The Old Saloon' 2 *BM* 141 pp. 291-315

March

'The Old Saloon' 3 *BM* 141 pp. 416-57

April

'The Old Saloon' 4 *BM* 141 pp. 552-72

May

'The Old Saloon' 5 *BM* 141 pp. 683-710

'The Rev. W. Lucas Collins' *BM* 141 pp. 734-6

June

'The Old Saloon' 6 *BM* 141 pp. 737-61

July

'The Old Saloon' 7 *BM* 142 pp. 99-123

August

'The Old Saloon' 8 *BM* 142 pp. 235-63

September

'Marco Polo' *BM* 142 pp. 373-86 (Reprinted as Part II, chapter I of *The Makers of Venice*, London: Macmillan, 1887)

November

'The Old Saloon' 9 *BM* 142 pp. 698-714

December

Diary entry for Christmas Night

'Mrs Craik' *MM* 57 pp. 81-5

1888

Cousin Mary (London: S. W. Partridge 1888)

Memoir of the Life of John Tulloch (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1888)

1888 Diary

January

'The Old Saloon' 10 *BM* 143 pp. 104-27

'A Fireside Commentary' 1 *SJG* 11 Jan pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 2 *SJG* 21 Jan pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 3 *SJG* 30 Jan pp. 5-6

'The Story of the Nations: Ireland' *Spectator* 14 Jan pp. 60-61

February

'A Fireside Commentary' 4 *SJG* 6 Feb pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 5 *SJG* 10 Feb pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 6 *SJG* 17 Feb pp. 6-7

'A Fireside Commentary' 7 *SJG* 27 Feb pp. 5-6

March

'A Fireside Commentary' 8 *SJG* 5 Mar pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 9 *SJG* 12 Mar pp. 6-7

'A Fireside Commentary' 10 *SJG* 16 Mar pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 11 *SJG* 24 Mar pp. 6

April

'Mr Sandford' *CM* 57 Apr- May (to be published as part of *The Ways of Life*, London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1897)

'A Fireside Commentary' 12 *SJG* 4 Apr pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 13 *SJG* 14 Apr p. 6

'A Fireside Commentary' 14 *SJG* 23 Apr pp. 5-6

'A Fireside Commentary' 15 *SJG* 28 Apr pp. 5-6

May

'A Fireside Commentary' 16 *SJG* 5 May pp. 5-6
 'A Fireside Commentary' 17 *SJG* 9 May pp. 5-6
 'A Fireside Commentary' 18 *SJG* 16 May pp. 6-7
 'A forthcoming book and its author' *SJG* 22 May pp. 5-6
 'A Fireside Commentary' 19 *SJG* 28 May p. 6
 'A Fireside Commentary' 20 *SJG* 31 May pp. 5-6

June

'A Fireside Commentary' 21 *SJG* 8 Jun pp. 5-6
 'Taking offence' *SJG* 15 Jun p. 6
 'Heroes: Mortality and Immortality' *SJG* 20 Jun pp. 6
 'The Baby Next Door' *SJG* 25 Jun pp. 6-7
 'The Fallible and the Infallible' *SJG* 29 Jun pp. 5-6
 'The Pictures of the Year' *BM* 143 pp. 813-26
 'The Old Saloon' 11 *BM* 143 pp. 831-52

July

'The End of the Mourning' *SJG* 5 Jul pp. 5-6
 'A Fine Day' *SJG* 9 Jul 5-6
 'Fantastic Politics: Patriotism and Pay' *SJG* 18 Jul pp. 5-6
 'Facts – And fiction' *SJG* 20 Jul pp. 6-7
 'Silly Women' *SJG* 25 Jul pp. 6
 'Silly Men' *SJG* 28 Jul pp. 5-6

August

'Incorporated Authors' *SJG* 2 Aug pp. 6-7
 'Publishers- Not Incorporated' *SJG* 15 Aug pp. 6-7
 'Authors and Publishers' *SJG* 24 Aug pp. 6

September

'The Old Saloon' 12 *BM* 144 pp. 419-43

October

'Maitland of Lethington' *BM* 144 6 Oct pp. 1363-4

November

'On the Dark Mountains' *BM* 144
 'The Little Dirty Angel' *Windsor Court and Bazaar News*

December

'The Old Saloon' 13 *BM* 144 pp. 874-99

1889

Lady Car: The sequel of a life (LM 13-14; March-Jul 1889; book form: London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1889)

Kirsteen: The Story of a Scotch Family Seventy Years ago (MM 60-62; Aug 1889-Aug 1890; book form: London: Macmillan and Co. 1890)

The Mystery of Mrs Blencarrow (*Manchester Weekly Times* and another papers November- December 1889; book form: London: Spencer Blackett, 1890)

'Cowper, William' [article for *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* 3] pp.534-6

January

'The Emperor Frederick' *BM* 145 pp. 109-19

February

'Laurence Oliphant' *BM* 145 pp. 280-96

March

'The Old Saloon' 14 *BM* 145 pp. 421-36

April

'The Old Saloon' 15 *BM* 145 pp. 561-72

May

'On the Riviera' *BM* 145 pp. 676-88

'Success in Fiction' *Forum* 7 pp. 314-22

June

'The Old Saloon' 16 *BM* 145 pp. 809-34

August

'The Old Saloon' 17 *BM* 146 pp. 254-75

November

'Mademoiselle' *CM* 60 Nov-Dec (afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

'Margaret of Scotland' *EIM* 7 pp. 77-91 (Part I of *Royal Edinburgh*, London: Macmillan, 1890)

'The Old Saloon' 18 *BM* 146 pp. 696-723

December

'A Commentary from my Chair' 1 *Spectator* 7 Dec pp. 804-5

'A Commentary from an Easy Chair' 2 *Spectator* 14 Dec pp. 842-3

'A Commentary from an Easy Chair' 3 *Spectator* 21 Dec pp. 881-2

'A Commentary from an Easy Chair' 4 *Spectator* 28 Dec pp. 921-2

'The Old Saloon' 19 *BM* 857-78

1890

Royal Edinburgh (London: Macmillan)

A House of Peace (London: Printed at Office of the Art Journal, 1890)

'Irving, Edward' [article for *Chambers's Encyclopedia* 6, revised by Oliphant] p. 226

The Railwayman and his Children (*The Sun Magazine* Oct 1890- Sept 1891; book form: London: Macmillan, 1891)

The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent (*Birmingham Weekly Post* and other papers, October 1890- April 1891; book form: London: Macmillan, 1892)

Sons and Daughters (*BM* 147 Mar- Apr 1890; book form: Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1890)

January

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 5 *Spectator* 4 Jan pp. 13-14

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 6 *Spectator* 11 Jan pp. 49-50

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 7 *Spectator* 18 Jan pp. 84-5

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 8 *Spectator* 25 Jan pp. 116-17

'The Old Saloon' 20 *BM* 147 pp. 131-51

February

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 9 *Spectator* 1 Feb pp. 164-5

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 10 *Spectator* 8 Feb pp. 199-200

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 11 *Spectator* 15 Feb pp. 233-4

March

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 12 *Spectator* 1 Mar pp. 302-3

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 13 *Spectator* 8 Mar pp. 336-7

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 14 *Spectator* 15 Mar pp. 371-2

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 15 *Spectator* 29 Mar pp. 438-9

'The Old Saloon' 21 *BM* 147 pp. 408-28

'Lord Lamington' *BM* 147 pp. 449-450

May

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 16 *Spectator* 3 May pp. 620-1

July

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 17 *Spectator* 5 Jul pp. 11-12

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 18 *Spectator* 12 Jul pp. 49-50

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 19 *Spectator* 19 Jul pp. 81-3

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 20 *Spectator* 26 Jul pp. 113-4

'The Holy Land' *BM* 148 pp. 1-18

August

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 21 *Spectator* 2 Aug pp. 146-7

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 22 *Spectator* 9 Aug pp. 177-8

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 23 *Spectator* 16 Aug pp. 210-11

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 24 *Spectator* 23 Aug pp. 242-3

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 25 *Spectator* 30 Aug pp. 274-5

September

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 26 *Spectator* 6 Sep pp. 307-8

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 27 *Spectator* 13 Sep pp. 339-40

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 28 *Spectator* 20 Sep pp. 374-5

October

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 29 *Spectator* 4 Oct pp. 438-9

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 30 *Spectator* 11 Oct pp. 473-4

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 31 *Spectator* 18 Oct pp. 520-1

'Edinburgh' *EIM* 8 pp. 48-57

November

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 32 *Spectator* 1 Nov pp. 593-4

'A Commentary in an Easy Chair' 33 *Spectator* 8 Nov pp. 644-5

The third section of the *Autobiography*

December

Autobiography continued

1891

Memoir of the Life of Laurence Oliphant and of Alice Oliphant, His Wife (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1891)

The House of David (to become part 1 of *Jerusalem*, London: Macmillan)

Jerusalem: Its History and Hope (London: Macmillan, 1891)

Lady William (*Lady's Pictorial* Jan-Jun 1891; book form: London: Macmillan, 1893)

The Marriage of Elinor (*GW* Jan-Dec 1891; book form: London: Macmillan, 1892)

Janet (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1891)

The Cuckoo in the Nest (*The Victoria Magazine* Dec 1891- Nov 1892; book form: London: Hutchinson and Co, 1892)

January

Autobiography continued

February

'The Complaints of Authors' *The Athenaeum* (7 Feb)

Autobiography continued

August

'The Old Saloon' 22 *BM* 150 pp. 273-98

'The Golden Rule' *Black and White* (22 Aug)

November

'The Old Saloon' 23 *BM* 150 pp. 712-35

December

'A Chance Encounter' *Black and White* (12 Dec)

1892

The Victorian Age of English Literature with F.R. Oliphant (London: Percival and Co, 1892)

The Sorceress (*The Gentlewoman* and other papers, Jul 1892- Jan 1893; simultaneously; book form: London: F. V. White and Co, 1893)

'Sheridan, Richard Brinsley' *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* 9 pp. 392-3

'A Story of a Wedding Tour' (published in a periodical between Apr 1892 and Mar 1894, afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

January

'The Strange Story of Mr Dalyell' *CM* 65 Jan- Mar 1892, pp. 85-112; 195-224 (to be published in the volume *The Ways of Life*, together with 'Mr Sandford,' London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1897)

February

'The Old Saloon – Lady Travellers' 24 *BM* 150 pp. 299-318

'The Duke of Clarence' *BM* 150 pp. 326-8

'Sheridan, Richard Brinsley' *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* pp.392-3

'The Girl of the Period' *EIM*

March

'The City of St Andrews' *BM* 151 pp. 370-7

'The Old Saloon' 25 *BM* 151 pp. 455-74

April

'Advice to our Young Woman Readers' *Wit and Wisdom* 9 Apr p. 370

August

'Aunt Anne' *Spectator* 6 Aug pp. 195-6

October

'Alfred Tennyson' [obituary poem] *Spectator* 15 Oct p. 528

'The Old Saloon' 26 *BM* 152 pp. 574-96

'Mary's Brother' *Atalanta* 7 pp. 56-9

November

'Tennyson' *BM* 152 pp. 748-66

December

'The Apology of Age to Youth' *Spectator* 24 Dec pp. 923

'The Old Saloon' 27 *BM* 152 pp. 852-73

1893

Thomas Chalmers, Preacher, Philosopher and Statesman (London: Methuen, 1893)
Sir Robert's Fortune: The Story of a Scotch Moor (*Atalanta*, Oct 1893- Sep 1894;
book form: London: Methuen and Co, 1895)
A House in Bloomsbury (*The Young Woman* Oct 1893- Sep 1894; published in book
form: London: Hutchinson and Co)
'A Widow's Tale' (*CM* 68 Jul- Sep 1893, pp. 92-112; 207-24; 318-36; later to be
collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

January

'Isabel Dysart' *Chamber's Journal* (collected in *That Little Cutty and other stories*,
London: Macmillan, 1898)

February

'San Remo' *GW* 34 pp. 124-30

March

'The Member's Wife' *The National Observer*

April

'A Visitor and His Opinions' *BM* 153

'The Princess Anne' *Cent* 45 pp. 904-22 (Chapter 1 of *The Reign of Queen Anne*, to
be published by London: Macmillan, 1894)

May

'The Queen and the Duchess' *Cent* 46 pp. 101-19 (Chapter 2 of *The Reign of Queen
Anne*, to be published by London: Macmillan, 1894)

June

'Venice' *Spectator* 24 Jun pp. 827-9

'A Widow's Tale' (*CM* Jul- Sept)

July

'The Author of *Gulliver*' *Cent* 46 pp. 401-18 (Chapter 5 of *The Reign of Queen
Anne*, to be published by London: Macmillan, 1894)

'Marriage Bells' *BM* 154 pp. 155-8

September

'The Author of *Robinson Crusoe*' *Cent* 46 (Chapter 6 of *The Reign of Queen Anne*,
to be published by London: Macmillan, 1894) pp. 740-53

October

'The Whirl of Youth' (*The National Observer*, afterwards collected in *A Widow's
Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

'Things in General' 1 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 56-9

November

'Things in General' 2 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 122-3

December

'Things in General' 3 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 220-3

1894

A House in Bloomsbury (*The Young Woman* Oct 1893- Sept 1894; book form:
London: Hutchinson and Co, 1894)

The Reign of Queen Anne (London: Macmillan, 5 chapters used from the *Century*
1893 and 1894, and new chapters added)

Who Was Lost and Is Found (*BM* 155-6; Jun-Nov 1894; book form: Edinburgh and
London: Blackwood, 1894)

Two Strangers (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894)

January

'Things in General' 4 *Atalanta* pp. 286-8

'Letters of Sir Walter Scott' *BM* 155 pp. 15-26

February

'Dean Stanley' *BM* 155 pp. 190-209

March

'John' (*Pall Mall Magazine*, afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

'Things in General' 5 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 415-7

April

'Things in General' 6 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 478-81

May

'Things in General' 7 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 543-5

June

'Things in General' 8 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 603-5

August

'Things in General' 9 *Atalanta* 7 pp. 732-4

'The Looker-On' 1 *BM* 155 pp. 285-308

September

'Things in General' 10 *Atalanta* pp. 800-1

'Addison the Humourist' *Cent* 48 pp. 702-09 (chapter 7 of *The Reign of Queen Anne*, to be published by London: Macmillan, 1894)

October

Autobiography continued

November

'An Eton Master' *BM* 156 pp. 693-9

December

Autobiography continued

'Prayers for the Dead' *Spectator* p. 847

1895

The Makers of Modern Rome (London: Macmillan, 1895)

Old Mr Tredgold (*LM* 26-28; Jun 1895-May 1896; book form: London: Longman's, 1895)

'Oliphant, Francis Wilson' *DNB* 42. pp. 129-30 (Oliphant probably collaborated with her son F. R. Oliphant in writing this article)

Dies Irae (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1895)

January

'The Looker-On' 2 *BM* 157 pp. 148-70

February

'The Fancies of a Believer' *BM* 157 pp. 237-55

March

'The Mysterious Bridegroom' *PM* pp.

'A Farewell' [poem] *Spectator* 2 Mar pp. 294-5

April

'Men and Women' *BM* 157 pp. 620-50
'Life and Letters of Mrs Craven' *ER* 181 pp. 315-45
'John Stuart Blackie' *BM* 157 pp. 662-4
June
'The Looker-On' 3 *BM* 157 pp. 902-29
December
'A Maiden's Mind' *Atalanta*
'The Looker-On' 4 *BM* 158 pp. 905-27

1896

A Child's History of Scotland (London: T. Fisher Unwin, dated 1895, published 1896)
The Unjust Steward or the Minister's Debt (London and Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1896)
Jeanne D'Arc: Her Life and Death (NY and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896)

January

1896 Diary

'The Anti-Marriage League' *BM* 159 pp. 135-49

'The Library Window' *BM* 159 pp. 1-30.

February

'The Seen and the Unseen' *Spectator* p. 166

March

'The Heirs of Kellie, an Episode of Family History' *BM* 159 (afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898) pp. 325-363

'A Noble Lady' *The New Review* 14 pp. 241-7

May

'The Strange Adventures of John Percival' *Chambers's Journal* (afterwards collected in *A Widow's Tale*, Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1898)

June

'The Looker-On' 5 *BM* 159 pp. 901-26

October

'The Looker-On' 6 *BM* 160 pp. 481-507

'The Verdict of Old Age' *BM* 160 pp. 555-71

November

'John Gibson Lockhart' *BM* 160 pp. 607-25

December

'A Raid Among Books' *BM* 160 pp. 822-46

1897

Annals of a Publishing House 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1897)
'The Sisters Brontë' chapter contributed to *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1897) pp. 1-59

January

'The Land of Suspense' *BM* 161 pp. 131-157

February

'The Land of the Dollar' *Spectator* 13 Feb pp. 240-41

April

'Recent Books: French and English' *BM* 161 pp. 455-84

May

" 'Tis sixty years Since" *BM* 161 pp. 599-624

June

'The Queen's Record Reign' *The Graphic* Diamond Jubilee number (the rewritten and amended version of the article of Jun 1880, also published in *The Graphic*)

'22nd Jun 1897' [poem] *BM* 161 pp. 887-8

'The Queen' *GW* 38 pp. 380-6

Writing published posthumously, written in 1897

'On the Edge of the World I lie, I lie' [poem] published in *Autobiography and Letters*, 1899 p. 438

'Siena' *BM* 164 Jul 1898 pp. 23-39

Queen Victoria: A Personal Sketch (rewritten version of Jun 1897 essay published in *The Graphic*, London, Paris, New York and Melbourne: Cassell and Company Limited, 1900)